

New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies

ESSAYS FROM THE 1998 HARVARD CONFERENCE

Manuscripts are the basic primary material evidence for literary scholars and historians; no longer regarded as inert witnesses, they now contribute in manifold ways to the continuing process of discovery. Derek Pearsall, whose work has been of first importance in establishing the value of the evidence manuscripts can offer, here leads a British–North American group of scholars in discussion of current developments and vital questions about the future of manuscript study. Topics include codicology and book production; textual criticism; the material structure of the medieval book; the relation of manuscripts to literary culture, social history and medieval theatre; and emerging technology.

DEREK PEARSALL is former Professor and Co-Director of the Centre for Medieval Studies, York, and Professor of English at Harvard University.

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New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies

ESSAYS FROM THE 1998 HARVARD CONFERENCE

Edited by
DEREK PEARSALL



THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

YORK MEDIEVAL PRESS

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First published 2000

A York Medieval Press publication
in association with The Boydell Press
an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9 Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 3DF UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
PO Box 41026 Rochester NY 14604-4126 USA
website: <http://www.boydell.co.uk>
and with the
Centre for Medieval Studies, University of York

ISBN 1 903153 01 8

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
New directions in later medieval manuscript studies: essays from the 1998
Harvard conference/edited by Derek Pearsall.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-903153-01-8 (acid-free paper)

1. English literature – Middle English, 1100–1500 – Criticism, Textual – Congresses. 2. Manuscripts, Medieval – England – Congresses. 3. Manuscripts, Medieval – Congresses. 4. Transmission of texts – Congresses. I. Pearsall, Derek Albert.

PR275.T45 N475 2000
820.9'001–dc21

00-040840

This publication is printed on acid-free paper

Typeset by Joshua Associates Ltd, Oxford
Printed in Great Britain by
St Edmundsbury Press Ltd, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I should like to thank all those scholars who accepted the invitation to the Harvard conference on 'New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies' in October 1998 and helped to make it a success, particularly those who prepared their conference papers for publication in the present volume. I am grateful to the Committee on Medieval Studies of Harvard University for the financial subvention which assisted with the costs of publication, to Mary-Jo Arn and Katharine Horsley for help at various stages in the preparation of the book, and to the staff of Boydell & Brewer for making my task so easy.

Picture credits are acknowledged by individual contributors.

Introduction

DEREK PEARSALL

The study of manuscripts is one of the most active areas of current research in medieval studies: manuscripts are the basic primary material evidence for literary scholars, historians and art-historians alike, and there has been an explosion of interest over the past twenty or twenty-five years. Manuscript study has developed enormously: codices are no longer treated as inert witnesses to a culture whose character has already been determined by the modern scholar, but are active participants in a process of exploration and discovery. All aspects of the manuscript's physical existence are relevant to such an enquiry, not just the texts it contains, but the materials, the choice and arrangement of contents, the lay-out and format of the page, the choice of script, the hierarchy of decoration, the illustration, the use of marginal annotation and glossing. Even after a manuscript has been 'published', it remains an active witness to the culture of its reception, in the scope it offers for readers' marginal and other comments.

I believed all this twenty years ago, when during the early 1980s I organised a series of biennial conferences at the University of York on late medieval English manuscript studies. Two books of essays collected from the papers given at those conferences were subsequently published: *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), and *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987). The conferences were continued, on a slightly different basis and with a different emphasis, after I left York for Harvard in 1985. But I have lost none of my conviction of the centrality of manuscript studies to the discipline of medieval studies, and so it seemed to me appropriate that during my last year at Harvard I should organise another conference on medieval manuscript studies, to see where the subject had got to. Such was the originating moment of the conference at Harvard University in October 1998 held under the auspices of the Committee on Medieval Studies. The title, 'New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies', was entirely predictable, given the rapid approach of the millennium with all its expectations of renewal.

Not all the twenty-one papers presented at the conference were available

for publication but there are enough here to indicate something of the rich and suggestive variety of contributions that were offered. Late medieval manuscript studies have in fact entered a particularly exciting phase, in which the work of the last two or three decades is beginning to be consolidated. More and more detailed work on individual manuscripts is gradually filling in pieces in a large jigsaw, and there were papers at the conference by scholars who are beginning to see what the large picture looks like. Since it seems to me that arrangements of such a collection of essays by topic often obscure important cross-currents of connection and pretend to an impossible divisibility of the subject-matter, I have left them in alphabetical order of author's surname, with the exception of the essay by Ian Doyle, which stands properly first. Doyle bravely took on the task with which he was charged of giving a survey of recent developments and of anticipating what other speakers might have omitted. His talk, as he makes clear, was the opening event of the conference, and it was as magisterial in its command of the field as one might expect from the doyen of late medieval English manuscript studies. He attends, in turn, to palaeography, codicology, the material structures of manuscripts, scribal and production practice, and more briefly to the overlap of manuscript and printed book production, book-binding, and the emerging technology of computerised digitisation and hypertext display.

Let me begin my brief introduction to the essays in this volume by drawing attention to the three essays that fall into Doyle's last category and that constitute, without question, the newest of new directions. Norman Blake offers, not for the first time, an explanation of the 'Canterbury Tales Project' which he has master-minded, an approach to the analysis of textual variants involving a computerised analysis of affiliations (using techniques derived from the biological sciences) which is more comprehensive and systematic than anything previously achieved by hand. This, as he explains, is made possible by the digitised representation through electronic transcription of all manuscript witnesses and the provision on CD-ROM of a facility (in future searchable) by which all witnesses can be simultaneously accessed. The advantages of this new method, which Blake makes freshly evident, are that it gives all manuscripts, including those not traditionally favoured by editors, a chance to play their part in the understanding of text-generation, and it eliminates the curse of the lemma, by which changes introduced in different manuscripts are made to seem, in their truncated and unintelligible form, solely in relation to the chosen copy-text and without the surrounding context, aberrant.

Martha Driver, in a closely related study, designed, as she says, to 'comfort the fearful', investigates some of the possibilities for future research offered by electronic resources. She includes an interim survey of manuscript sites available on the World Wide Web, a lively examination of some of the recent Internet publicity generated by the electronic Canterbury Tales Project, and

an enthusiastic account of some of the opportunities offered by electronic media for teaching manuscript studies. Of all the essays in the volume it is the one most whole-heartedly committed to a 'New Direction'. Alison Stones gives an account of a specific project for the computerised study of manuscripts. She describes the creation of a searchable database of manuscript pages and images of certain medieval French prose romances so as to provide more information on the makers and illustrators of these manuscripts, their intentions and practices. In the process she provides much information on other Web sites where digitised images of illuminated manuscripts are available or being planned.

There are comparatively few essays here on certain traditional aspects of manuscript study relating to the material structure of the manuscript book and the hands of scribes. Perhaps this reflects the primary interests of the organiser of the conference. But Peter Gumbert offers a study of some of the technical aspects of the make-up of the medieval manuscript book and in particular of the means by which the skins of animals were made into parchment bifolia and quires convenient for the use of the scribe. It is, as he says, part of the history of the craft of book-making, part of the history of the book, and as such, no less than the study of the texts that the manuscripts contain, part of cultural history. Investigation of the making of books is also Linne Mooney's principal subject. She describes the way in which scribal profiles have been built up for scribes identified in several extant manuscripts, and how the making of the profiles might be made more accurate and comprehensive in the future by digital means. I suppose that there are ways in which this could inform text-investigation (in the case of multiple copying of the same text by the same scribe) but the main bearing would be upon the history of book production as a specialised but nonetheless important aspect of cultural history.

For the rest, the essays in the volume deal with the ways in which manuscript study enhances understanding of the texts that they contain and of the literary histories in which those texts are incorporated. The broadest approach to such questions is offered by Ralph Hanna and John Thompson. Hanna is emphatic about the role of the study of manuscripts in the making of cultural history, and most people, I am sure, would accept his view, provided they were allowed to make their own definition of 'cultural history'. Hanna's own contribution, an investigation of the manuscripts that might be used to give a context for the hitherto contextless Auchinleck manuscript and therefore a new picture of London culture and English literary history in the years from 1320 to 1350, is central to such an understanding of the direction manuscript study should take. Thompson examines some of the positions that have been taken up, whether consciously 'theoretical' or not, in assessing the kinds of evidence manuscripts provide about medieval textuality, manuscript culture and the history of the book and of reading. He takes up two issues in Hoccleve and Lydgate manuscripts

relating to 'father Chaucer' and shows from the evidence of the manuscripts that matters are not so clear-cut as they have sometimes been represented in literary history.

More particular questions are taken up by Julia Boffey and Tony Edwards. Boffey, responding to a call to say something about the interface between literary manuscripts and archival materials, shows some of the rewards that accompany the expansion of manuscript searching by literary scholars to include those kinds of documentary record that usually get missed. She gives glimpses of the unexpected finds that have been and are still to be made in such archive repositories – literary manuscripts unexpectedly turning up in record offices, and poems and verses found inscribed in record rolls, rentals, court rolls, liturgical calendars, account-books, legal indentures and land-grants. She points thus to a very positively New Direction, one that might lead to new finds. Edwards, concerned with the manner in which the manuscripts of medieval texts are represented, and misrepresented, in modern editions, concentrates on typographical rather than editorial (that is, emendatory) practice, and makes some contrasts between the primacy accorded the text *qua* text in modern critical editions and the respect paid to the manuscript representation of the text in early editions by Sir Frederic Madden. The modern critical edition, Edwards points out, seems designed to separate the reader of the text from any consciousness of the physical and maybe messy reality of its origins. Facsimiles are one way of restoring that reality, but they are expensive to produce, and the most promising future lies perhaps in the direction of electronic facsimiles and manuscript digitisation. This, it will be seen, is a recurring theme of this collection, and not just in the essays devoted to electronic new directions.

Finally, there are three essays that deal with particular texts or groups of texts and show how new approaches to the study of the manuscripts in which they are contained offer promise of new understanding. Eckehard Simon, in an essay remarkable for its pioneering scholarship, describes how the manuscripts that survive of the fifteenth-century German carnival plays do indeed record texts, but are important also as evidence of the lost arena of performance, the urban culture in which the plays had their real existence. In a way that is more obvious than with non-dramatic or high-culture texts, the manuscript *is* the meaning of the text. English drama-historians will be green with envy when they read this essay, for they have nothing to match the richness of this archive and its immediacy to the circumstances of performance.

There are also two essays on *Piers Plowman*. David Benson traces some of the ways in which the complex manuscript situation of a poem like *Piers Plowman* has been differently interpreted, beginning with the idea that every manuscript must belong to one of three versions of the poem and that those three versions represent discrete stages in the evolution of the poem and the author's developing intention for it. He shows how more recent students of

the manuscripts and the texts they contain are inclined to read the situation differently – as evidence of more than three stages, none of them discrete, or as evidence of versions being produced ad hoc for different audiences, or as evidence of the complex interaction of author and scribe in text-production, or as evidence of the existence of a certain amount of inexplicable mess. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, in her essay on ‘Professional Readers of Langland’, describes how vital manuscripts are to literary scholars. ‘Professional readers’ are those people (including scribes) who made conscious decisions about how a text was to be presented in a manuscript-book. That such decisions were constantly being made is clear from the often sophisticated activity of editing, annotating, correcting, rubricating and illustrating that goes on. The presence of a text in a manuscript is just one piece of information: every aspect of text-presentation has further information to yield about the classes of readers and the reading-practices in which the work is to be situated. These kinds of information are not additional to a primary understanding of the text that might be derived from other sources, historical or intuitive: they are not mere ‘reception-history’; they are an essential part of the meaning of the text.

In conclusion, let me thank all the participants for accepting the invitation to come to the conference and give papers, and thank particularly those who have prepared their papers for publication in this volume. The conference was sponsored by the Committee on Medieval Studies at Harvard University, to whose members I am most grateful, as to Mary-Jo Arn, who gave me much help in the preparation of the final copy for the publishers. It will be clear that I have not attempted to erase the traces of the style of address adopted by the speakers for the purposes of their conference-presentations, and it will be likewise clear that there are some who use more colloquialisms and asides than others.

Recent Directions in Medieval Manuscript Study

A. I. DOYLE

You may have noticed the divergences of my title from that of the conference as a whole: 'Recent' for 'New' and 'Study' for 'Studies'. I am not confident that much of what I am going to talk about, nor, I suspect, other speakers, is entirely new, and whereas they may legitimately devote their interest and attention to single approaches in the study of manuscript books of the high and later Middle Ages, I believe my task is to try to survey and relate all in a more inclusive view, and, riskily, to supply anticipated omissions. I hope it will be seen that I am at a disadvantage in having to guess what the following speakers are going to discuss, from the titles they have given to their talks and what I know of some, if not all, of their previous work. I am taking it that our starting date is *c.* 1100, as first announced, and, from the programme, that the focus is on northern Europe and predominantly England.¹

I think I can best illustrate from my own experience the difference between probably the majority of students of medieval manuscripts, who concentrate on a restricted range of questions, if perhaps aware of wider ones, and those of us who have come to be inquisitive almost equally about every feature. Like many of the speakers here I started in English literature, by trying to discover who were the earliest readers and hearers of the late fourteenth-century alliterative poem of *Piers Plowman*, and when I decided that I could not find enough direct and indirect evidence about that work² I extended my research to a much wider audience of Middle English religious verse and prose. These were of course not even then untrodden paths; they have come more recently to be called Reception Studies, by what I think is a legitimate extension of the sense of an older German or French term, but I am disinclined to theorize about it.

¹ For details of and comments on earlier publications, up to 1981, there are two useful English resources: (i) L. N. Braswell, *Western Manuscripts from Classical Antiquity to the Renaissance: A Handbook* (New York, 1981); (ii) L. E. Boyle, *Medieval Latin Palaeography: A Bibliographical Introduction* (Toronto, 1984), professedly concentrating on the period 1150–1450 'for beginners'. The annual 'Bulletin Codicologique' in *Scriptorium* offers digests and comments, but belatedly, and not comprehensively for vernacular texts or manuscripts.

² It may be a mark of progress that subsequently several people, including me, have found more to say about this.

Records of English books in medieval library catalogues and other institutional lists are scarce; bequests in wills, somewhat more frequent, lead to backgrounds of testators and recipients, in recent years increasingly exploited,³ and in a few cases to surviving books. Examination of all the extant copies of a text offers the possibility of finding more names of early owners, if not always indisputable in date, the identity of whom may also be discoverable from documentary sources, and their social circumstances. But one soon comes to realise that it is the verbal and graphic contents of the manuscripts together with their physical characteristics which are the prime indicators for what sort of person and purpose, where and when each copy may have been made – not only the codices which contain a single text but also those which include several or many, whether assembled at one time or more, within the Middle Ages. That involves considering the associations of those other texts and their occurrence, separately or together, in other manuscripts, and any evidence for the latter's own histories. Vernacular texts were not always copied apart from those in Latin and, as I have more than once insisted elsewhere, manuscripts containing vernacular texts are and were always only a small proportion of the production and dissemination of literature, and scholars cannot afford to forget or neglect this if they are to make progress in the reconstruction of medieval mental and social relationships. And so, from inferring the interests of the people who commissioned or acquired the codices, you may be led, as I have been, into asking who actually made them and how the contents were communicated, both before and after copying.⁴

Even if you wish to limit your enquiries to one text, one genre or one language you will need help from palaeography, in its narrower sense of categorizing and dating scripts, and art history for decoration, textual criticism for affiliations and alterations of copies, linguistics for localizations, while still engaged in literary history. Each of those studies is an engrossing occupation in itself, though one may be able gradually to learn enough of some or all of them to do one's own assessment of manuscripts. Our keener consciousness of the desirability of this all-round treatment is, I suppose, one of our recent directions, yet hardly new, being presumed by the best earlier scholars.⁵

³ E.g., Susan Cavanaugh, 'A Study of Books Privately Owned in England 1300–1450', 2 vols. (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1980, University Microfilms 1983), primarily from printed sources; J. B. Friedman, *Northern English Books, Owners, and Makers in the Late Middle Ages* (Syracuse, NY, 1995), using the York registers.

⁴ See *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, England, 1989); *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, ed. L. L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1990); *Rationalisierung der Buchherstellung im Mittelalter und Frühneuzeit*, ed. P. Rück and M. Boghardt (Marburg, 1994); *Making the Medieval Book: Techniques of Production*, ed. L. L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1995).

⁵ E.g., Henry Bradshaw, Leopold Delisle, M. R. James, Paul Lehmann, N. R. Ker.

Palaeography, in the narrower sense already mentioned, has undoubtedly made considerable advances, with regard to the high and later Middle Ages, over the last half-century. The then newly instituted Comité International de Paléographie sponsored a symposium on *Nomenclature des écritures livresques* in 1953,⁶ and also the series of catalogues of dated and datable manuscript books in the libraries of each country, starting with France from 1959, and now running to over forty volumes (many double), three of such pairs so far for England.⁷

Between 1953 and 1963 T. A. M. Bishop published a number of concise notes identifying the work of scribes in late eleventh- and early twelfth-century English codices, two albums, the first with Pierre Chaplais in 1957 and 1961, on scribes of writs and charters in the same period, and in 1971 one on *English Caroline Minuscule*; while Neil Ker in 1960 produced his *English Manuscripts in the Century after the Norman Conquest* based on his Lyell lectures of 1952–53. From this groundwork (and one should not forget Sir Roger Mynors' monumental *Durham Cathedral Manuscripts to the End of the Twelfth Century* published in 1939 and so scarcely influential until after the Second World War) more recently, since 1982, Rodney Thomson, Tessa Webber, Michael Gullick, Richard Gameson and others have attempted to sort English sheep from foreign ones and into their home flocks and pedigrees, employing evidence of text and decoration in addition to script and chronicle.⁸ The method has been to examine closely and critically manuscripts associable with particular centres, monasteries and cathedrals, trying to discern sequences of production and acquisition in each place in relation to their specific histories. This of course is palaeography in a broader sense. The effect has been to provide a range of facsimiles, arguments and expertise which have facilitated comparative judgments of the probable dating and possible origins of manuscripts in England over the whole of the twelfth century and just before and after.

As I have already implied, this has been in consort with improvement in the corresponding art history, by a keener codicological awareness, from C. R. Dodwell's book on Canterbury manuscripts, 1954, Jonathan Alexander's on Mont Saint Michel, 1970, and Michael Kauffman's volume in the Survey of British Illuminated Manuscripts, 1975. Mont Saint Michel is a reminder that

⁶ B. Bischoff et al., *Nomenclature des écritures livresques du IX^e au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1954).

⁷ For an interim view see G. Grand et al., *Les Manuscrits datés: premier bilan et perspectives* (Paris, 1985).

⁸ R. M. Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey 1066–1235*, 2 vols. (Woodbridge, 1982); E. P. McLachlan, *The Scriptorium of Bury St Edmunds in the Twelfth Century* (New York, 1986); T. Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral c.1075–c.1125* (Oxford, 1992); M. Gullick, 'The Scribe of the Carleif Bible: A New Look at Late Eleventh-Century Durham Cathedral Manuscripts', in *Medieval Book Production*, ed. L. L. Brownrigg, pp. 61–83; R. Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c.1066–1130)* (Oxford, 1998).

the traffic of manuscripts, scribes, artists and styles across the Channel constantly requires acts of discrimination, and there is still a need for fresh formulation of criteria, running on into the thirteenth century, and beyond. *A l'autre côté de la Manche* François Avril has been the counterpart and collaborator of Jonathan Alexander in this work, some of it summarized in the survey of Bibliothèque Nationale illuminated manuscripts judged insular, 1987, and now we have Walter Kahn's pair of general volumes on Romanesque illuminated manuscripts, 1996, in the new Harvey Miller French survey edited by both Avril and Alexander. Along with the existing catalogues of dated and datable manuscripts for both countries there is no shortage of published material, and ample unpublished, for further progress in this period, nor is there any lack of activity.

I cannot speak with personal authority about other countries, especially in southern Europe: but I know of notable work on German and Slovenian scriptoria, for instance, which illustrates both international resemblances and distinctive characteristics.⁹

Gothic book hands of the thirteenth and later centuries have so far had less attention, except in the detailed descriptions of German vernacular books by Karin Schneider, from 1987, to which one would welcome English and French equivalents.¹⁰ I was not able to attend the Sandars lectures on book hands at Cambridge (England) by Albert Derolez, when he may have tried to fill some of the gaps in our knowledge about the *littera textualis*; he tells me publication is on the way. Nigel Morgan's two-volume survey of thirteenth-century English illumination gives guidance to the probable centres of patronage or production, with salutary instances of the peripatetic careers of artists, and the caveat that more research on non-illuminated manuscripts in the period is still needed.

The development of cursive scripts in and after the thirteenth century and their application to books resulted in a greater diversification nationally or regionally, and the great multiplication of documentary manuscripts affords a wealth of possibility of closer dating and even localizing criteria, but in England anyway archivists, since the days of Sir Hilary Jenkinson, do not appear to have been much interested in determining or discussing them for the benefit of other scholars. Early charters including the vernaculars (before the time when they occur often in England) have had attention in France and the Low Countries, as much for the language as script, I think. But here I hope for some amplifying or correcting comment from other people present.

It is the hierarchy and morphology, and therewith the development, of cursive scripts in books which were addressed in the Comité symposium on

⁹ A. Cohen-Mushlin, *A Medieval Scriptorium: Sancta Maria Magdalena de Frankendal*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1990); N. Golob, *Twelfth-Century Cistercian Manuscripts: The Sitticum Collection* (London, 1996).

¹⁰ K. Schneider, *Gotischer Schriften in deutscher Sprache*, I, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1987), et seq.

Nomenclature by Gerard Lieftinck in 1953. He not only proposed a nomenclature for the degree of formality of specimens but also a definition of the key graphs of a type of script for which at that time he took the prevalent broader term 'bastarda', but later decided to substitute a less over-used, yet comparably ambiguous name, 'hybrida'. This genuinely distinct script was one common at first only in a relatively limited geographical zone of the Low Countries and Germany in the fifteenth century, though paralleled and imitated increasingly elsewhere; but the term has been resisted, even for the same type, by some scholars who have preferred sticking to the longer-established bastard, while a few have used 'hybrida' equivalently for any script of mixed forms. Moreover Lieftinck's system was not all-embracing even for northern Europe and some scripts, notably the English, did not fit it. To circumvent this impasse Peter Gumbert, Lieftinck's successor at Leiden, has devised an ingenious Cartesian cube which enables one to designate the set of key characteristics of a cursive or semi-cursive script by a simple unprejudicial code, but it has not had a great deal of publicity and so cannot yet be said to have caught on.¹¹ I am afraid palaeographers are very loath to change their habits in such respects, and other manuscript students tend to follow older models unwittingly or else to adopt new terms uncomprehendingly. Impelled by the Comité *Nomenclature* and the problems of teaching, Julian Brown worked out a quite elaborate though very consistent scheme covering all types of Latin script, which he never published but which his pupil Michelle Brown has adopted patchily in her *Guide to Western Historical Scripts*, 1990. (I should make it clear that I am *not* referring here to his system for the early insular scripts, which he outlined in his Lyell lectures at Oxford, but has never been published in full; it falls outside the date-limits of this conference.¹²)

Following leads by Neil Ker it was Malcolm Parkes who produced a fresh diagnosis of *English Cursive Book Hands* in his Oxford album of 1969.¹³ The term Anglicana has been generally welcomed to describe the obvious features of the traditional cursive script which persisted in England after they had been superseded in most continental regions by the second half of the fourteenth century. The term Secretary, applied by Ker and Parkes, on good historical and morphological grounds, to the British adoptions and adaptations of the newer continental Cursiva, from the last third of the fourteenth century on, has however not always been applied accurately in subsequent accounts of manuscripts by editors, cataloguers and other scholars, because of the manifold combinations or mixtures of features (graphs and duct) from Anglicana and Secretary script in fifteenth-century manuscripts, where judgments of the predominance of the one or the other

¹¹ J. P. Gumbert, 'Nomenclatur als Gradnetz: ein Versuch an spätmittelalterlichen Schriftformen', *Codices Manuscripti* 1 (1975), 122–5.

¹² See T. J. Brown, *A Palaeographer's View*, ed. J. Bately et al. (London, 1993).

¹³ Reprinted with addenda (Aldershot, 1979).

naturally may differ. Users also find it difficult to distinguish in practice between Parkes's Bastard Anglicana and Anglicana Formata. The term Fere-Textura, which I think I introduced as a parallel to one of Lieftinck's, has also suffered separation from the specific limited conventions it was intended to describe.¹⁴

Some people have an impatience with terminology, but we do need special names to emphasize things and concepts, and particularly in teaching. We do not all need to use the same words for the same things, but we do all need to be able to translate *within* one language as well as from one language to another, and so to know when the meanings coincide and when they do not. One of the Comité International's long-standing projects is a multilingual vocabulary of palaeographical and codicological terms, the former to be founded in part on research into medieval usage. It has not yet emerged, and the English members of the Comité preferred to encourage the codicological vocabulary without strictly palaeographical terms, of which Denis Muzerelle produced the illustrated French version in 1985, followed by an Italian in 1996 and a Spanish in 1997.¹⁵ And now there are additional reasons, besides national honour, for aiming to produce an Anglophone vocabulary, not only codicological but also palaeographical. The recent projects for electronic cataloguing standards for manuscript codices on both sides of the Atlantic, EAMMS (Electronic Access to Medieval Manuscripts) here and MASTER (Manuscript Access through Standards for Electronic Records) in Europe, besides previous independent subject-based and national ones, require thesauruses (or thesauri if you like) of recognized terms in all aspects of descriptions, multilingual or even English only (since it has become the electronic lingua franca), for the records to be word-searchable, whether free-text or within fields, as may be convenient. Such a thesaurus could be a large concordance of known terms, some synonyms, to allow for a variety of users and also to encourage consistency in use, not to dictate complete uniformity. Of course it should not be compiled only in England. Small working-groups on both sides of the Atlantic and in the Antipodes at least might draw up and exchange lists of terms within particular fields, and meet, if at all, only to finish publishable drafts of portions. The European vocabularies have had public funding for dedicated workers, and an English-language one would be expedited if someone could be hired or would volunteer as general editor.

The European vocabularies contain many terms for technical processes and things in the making of manuscript books which will be unknown to, or unneeded by, many students of texts and their reception, yet are increasingly wanted by others. I said how I started as such a literary historian but have become ever more interested in how manuscript books were made, not just in

¹⁴ Specifically with both *f* and long *s* descending below the writing line, which is not so in strict textura.

¹⁵ M. Maniaci, *Terminologia del Libro Manoscritto* (Rome, 1996); P. Ostos et al. *Vocabulario de Codicología* (Madrid, 1997).

one period or place. If one is, as I have been, a curator and cataloguer of a collection of medieval manuscripts of diverse dates, languages and subjects, and furthermore a guide to them for other people, whether students in classes or occasional visitors, one is asked, or asks oneself, various things about manufacture which handbooks of palaeography or *Handschriftenkunde* do not mention, or else do not sufficiently explain. The more manuscripts of the same texts one examines in comparative study the more one is challenged to understand why they differ or accord in certain physical respects. And to ask, can such physical details tell us more about the makers and circumstances of making? This is one aspect of what has come to be called codicology, more narrowly the archaeology of the book, not only the processes and materials of its making but also the cultural and historical circumstances. It is forty years since Geoffrey Ivy published a short essay on elementary practical questions,¹⁶ but there is not as yet an embracing treatment in English, though I know that there are at least two potential authors here present. There is a useful privately-circulated loose-leaf manual in Dutch, *De Descriptio Codicum*, by Hermans and Huisman, 1981. Jacques Lemaire's *Introduction à la Codicologie*, 1989, owing much to Léon Gilissen, is not comprehensive enough. We may well envy Malachi Beit-Arié's *Hebrew Codicology*, 1981, based on the comprehensive analytical surveys of that comparatively limited field conducted in France and Israel, and learn from it, as well as the pamphlet on contemporary *Bookmaking in Ethiopia* by Sergew Hable Selassie, also published in 1981.¹⁷

But investigation of western medieval materials and practices has been improving rapidly since those dates in the 1980s. If we look at particular aspects in order, the writing surfaces, *le support* in French, first the study of watermarks (about the value of which for a long time many scholars and cataloguers were frankly sceptical) has become very fruitful, from the combination of exact copying methods (betaradiography and others) and more extensive repertories, most notably the revised Briquet and Piccard; secondly, the different dimensions of paper sheets, affecting the size and format of codices through folding.¹⁸ Understanding of these factors has, it seems, spread backwards from the bibliography of early printed books, initially to manuscripts on paper and then to asking the same questions, much harder to answer, of manuscripts on membrane. Peter Gumbert will be

¹⁶ G. S. Ivy, 'The Bibliography of the Manuscript Book', in *The English Library before 1700*, ed. F. Wormald and C. E. Wright (London, 1958), pp. 32–65.

¹⁷ M. Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Codicology* (Paris, 1977; repr. with addenda and corrigenda, Jerusalem, 1981); S. H. Selassie, *Bookmaking in Ethiopia* (Leiden, 1981).

¹⁸ See R. J. Lyall, 'Materials: The Paper Revolution', in Griffiths and Pearsall, *Book Production*, pp. 11–29; P. Needham, 'Res Papireae: Sizes and Formats of the Late Medieval Book', in Rück and Boghardt, *Rationalisierung*, pp. 123–45; J. P. Gumbert, 'Sizes and Formats', in *Ancient and Medieval Book Materials and Techniques*, ed. M. Maniaci and P. F. Munafò, *Studi e Testi* 357–8 (Rome, 1993), I, 227–63.

talking to us on some of these questions. There have been more intensive efforts at scientific discrimination of the different kinds of beast providing the material, as well as at professional craft experience of both that and the various methods of preparation for writing, most fully reported in a large volume on parchment, edited by Peter Rück, 1991.¹⁹

Gilissen's and other attempts to establish geometrical standards for page proportions have not, I think, won very wide acceptance, but his formulae for the construction of quires from folded sheets, with examples of their cutting, are more persuasive, and conducive to investigations in one's own manuscripts, acting either as a cataloguer or a student.²⁰ If one cannot yet expect many such observations to be published concerning membrane manuscripts, it is remarkable that many descriptions of paper manuscripts still appear in print with no mention of format. Scarcely any mention of deckles on paper or irregular edges of membrane, and few edge-trimming, even when running heads or sidenotes are cropped. Such features can indicate the original quality of the manuscript, besides its construction, and useful hints about its later fortunes. We still do not know enough about the selection and supply of parchment and vellum of various kinds, though we do have the costs from bills in manuscripts and documents. When we come to pricking and ruling, there has been some useful recent experimentation with the instruments. For page or opening lay-out there has been a good deal of recording the patterns, and several schemes for coding them and the actual measurements, employing computer programmes and a disk, but so far no consensus to adopt one system, nor clear proofs of schools or places of particular medieval practices, I think. For certain types of text, however, the patterns and developments are obvious: Christopher de Hamel has categorized and illustrated glossed books of the Bible in the twelfth century, for instance.²¹ In 1944 Neil Ker drew up a list of manuscript features, chiefly of quiring and ruling, and the periods in which they began and ended, from his own experience up to that time. He never published it, although he deployed some of it in his *English Manuscripts in the Century after the Norman Conquest*, 1960. He did also publish in 1960 a classic note on 'Above and Below the Top Line', about the change in placing of the first written line on a page, up to c. 1230, on which Lemaire in 1989 threw some doubt, only for it to be amply vindicated with regard to continental manuscripts by Mario Palma in 1990.²² Datable developments

¹⁹ *Pergament: Geschichte, Struktur, Restaurierung, Herstellung*, ed. P. Rück (Sigmaringen, 1991).

²⁰ Leon Gilissen, *Prologomènes à la codicologie* (Ghent, 1977).

²¹ C. De Hamel, *Glossed Books of the Bible and the Origins of the Paris Booktrade* (Woodbridge, 1984).

²² N. R. Ker, *Books, Collectors and Libraries*, ed. A. G. Watson (London, 1985), pp. 70–7; M. Palma, 'Modifiche di alcuni aspetti materiali della produzione libraria latina nei secoli XII et XIII', in *Actas del VIII Coloquio del Comité Internacional de Paleografía Latina*, ed. M. Diaz y Diaz (Madrid, 1990), pp. 165–9.

in the articulation of texts and methods of indexing in the thirteenth century have been well sketched by Mary and Richard Rouse, Malcolm Parkes and Peter Gumbert.²³

The problem of how and when books were written, not page by page in sense order through the bifolia of quires, as is generally assumed was normal (and as most displacements in sequence confirm), but on uncut sheets each laid out for two or more bifolia, even all written on one side before the other, just as on imposed printed sheets, has exercised many eyes and minds over recent decades and produced a number of indisputable specimens, mostly surviving as waste in bindings but a few folded and bound in volumes, and some certainly earlier than the invention of printing. It was evidently most convenient for recopying page-for-page from very small books of standardized contents or lineated verse. Those discoveries and speculations have been made in a succession of separate essays by different scholars, from Charles Samaran in 1928 to Margaret Smith in 1995, a good example of international scholarly symbiosis.²⁴

This may be the best point to mention the work of Carla Bozzolo and Ezio Ornato, primarily *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge: trois essais de codicologie quantitative*, 1983, with a *Supplément* in the same year, and secondarily a gathering of separate essays since 1975, *La face cachée du livre médiéval*, involving many other collaborators, 1997.²⁵ For their 'codicologie quantitative' they first compiled a corpus of 6200 membrane codices of theology in collections already catalogued, attributable to the north of France from the ninth to the fourteenth century, and some smaller groups, subsequently utilizing the catalogues of dated and datable manuscripts in French and Belgian libraries. This was, with due recognition of disturbing factors such as rates of loss, in order to calculate the proportions of books produced in different periods and their different characteristics of construction, such as size, with practical and historical hypotheses for the explanation of each practice and change. They also gathered evidence for such things as the prices and costs of making books, time taken in copying, the composition of quires and sequence of copying, the various sizes and proportions of leaves, the relations of paper and membrane, and of vernacular to Latin texts, some from sources not confined to France.

Could anything analogous be attempted for the British Isles? Unfortunately

²³ M. A. and R. H. Rouse, *Authentic Witnesses: Approaches to Medieval Texts and Manuscripts ca 1250 – ca 1350* (Notre Dame, 1991), pp. 191–253; M. B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers* (London, 1991), pp. 35–70; J. P. Gumbert, "'Typography' in the Manuscript Book", *Journal of the Printing Historical Society* 22 (1993), 5–28.

²⁴ M. Smith, 'Imposition in Manuscripts: Evidence for the Use of Sense-sequence Copying in a New Fragment', in L. L. Brownrigg (ed.), *Making the Medieval Book*, pp. 145–56.

²⁵ C. Bozzolo and E. Ornato, *Pour une histoire* (Paris, 1980); *Supplément* (1983); E. Ornato et al., *La face cachée* (Rome, 1997).

British libraries, except for a few of the cathedrals (Durham, Worcester, Hereford, Lincoln, Salisbury) and some Oxford and Cambridge colleges, do not retain such coherent large indigenous medieval collections as do the national, municipal and departmental libraries in France, mostly acquired at or after the Revolution; the earlier dispersal and destruction by the English and Scottish Reformations were greater and the major British libraries have long been acquiring more manuscripts of diverse foreign origins. The catalogues of dated and datable manuscripts so far published for Britain, for the British Library, Oxford and Cambridge, the largest collections, and the smaller ones to follow, for London outside the British Library, the north-west, north-east, Scotland, Wales and so on, even adding a few instances from foreign catalogues, would not afford anything like the French quantity, since English scribes dated their books much less frequently than continental ones. It would need a much wider-ranging survey of other catalogues to compile a corpus comparable with the French, and still probably smaller.

It seems to me that significant statistics of manuscript practices, however, could be compiled on the English side of the Channel, with regard to particular texts (not necessarily of British origin) surviving in a large number of copies, Latin and vernacular, but only if the published descriptions, or any unpublished, should have the requisite details and consistency. Maybe the existing surveys of the copies of Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'Historia Regum Britanniae', the 'South English Legendary', 'Piers Plowman', the 'Confessio Amantis', the 'Canterbury Tales' or the 'Mirror of the Life of Christ' are enough to enable an analysis to tell us, as has to some degree been attempted, what proportion of what periods are on paper, for instance, the format and size of leaves, how many columns and lines per page, how many leaves per quire, and so on, in comparison with lists of other texts, especially ones of various kinds in Latin. The Edinburgh Dialect Survey produced maps indicating the regional spread of the 'Prick of Conscience', 'Piers Plowman', the 'Scale of Perfection' and Mirk's 'Festial', with which some correlation of physical characteristics may be possible.²⁶

Although Bozzolo and Ornato covered a longer stretch of time, their concentration was inevitably, in accordance with the expansion or survival they confirmed, on the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and so to a considerable degree on the characteristics of commercial book production in France. The practices of the university book-trade, notably the *pecia*, have had a good deal of fresh attention since Destrez, while Richard and Mary Rouse have also made great strides in identifying and locating the actual practitioners in Paris.²⁷ For England the late Graham Pollard documented the personnel of the trade in Oxford and its university milieu from

²⁶ Not all of these tentative mappings have been published.

²⁷ In their forthcoming monograph and previous papers, e.g., in *Authentic Witnesses*, pp. 259–338.

the end of the twelfth century, and Nigel Morgan has reviewed the evidence of illumination, remarking again on the want of study of plainer products there and from Cambridge.²⁸ Pollard also linked the documented book-binders of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, in Canterbury as well as Oxford, with particular tools and extant books, both manuscript and printed. He also collected, in cooperation with Neil Ker, the peculiarly English caution notes which record the dated pawning of books and silver, valued by the stationers, with names of the owners, at both universities, which I hope will all be published eventually with their comments. There has not yet been enough firm attachment of extant manuscripts, for which there are many candidates, with the book trade at either university, on evidence of script or decoration, or as has been claimed, colour of ink or membrane. Professors Parkes and De la Mare have each illustrated various hands active in Oxford, but the named scribes are often scholars, copying for themselves or other owners, not ostensibly employees of the stationers.²⁹ In the fifteenth century there appear in England and especially Oxford a number of named scribes of continental origins, apparently paid free-lances, presumably offering a better service in competition with native ones.³⁰ England lacks the notarial registers of Italy and Catalonia where informative contracts for writing books can be found. I know of only one in an English formulary, where the parties were perhaps significantly a Dutchman working in Oxford for a Venetian, with a Spanish witness.³¹

It seems that a London book-trade, in the sense of established shops (in contrast with casual copyists) was understandably of later origin than those in the two universities. Art historians have indicated some of the outstanding manuscripts which may have been made there in the first half of the fourteenth century, such as Queen Mary's Psalter and the Auchinleck Manuscript of English verse, or the Milemete group, as well as a number of provincial groups, East Anglian and others, well discussed in Lucy Sandler's two survey volumes, 1285–1385.³² Regional unillustrated book-production in that period and the following remains to be fully explored, the vernacular manuscripts offering one species of effective evidence by their dialects. Graham Pollard pointed out how the London scribes, stationers, text-writers and limners guild reorganizations of 1357 and 1403 must have reflected a growth in activity and specialization, which we can see in the books. Paul Christianson in his *Directory of London Stationers and Book Artisans 1300–1500* (1990) has collected all the names he could connect with aspects of

²⁸ N. Morgan, *Early Gothic Manuscripts*, I (London, 1982), 14–15; II (1988), 12–13, 19, 33–4.

²⁹ M. B. Parkes, 'The Provision of Books', in *History of the University of Oxford*, 2 vols., ed. J. I. Catto and R. Evans (Oxford, 1992), II, 407–83.

³⁰ Parkes, pp. 415–17.

³¹ Cited by Parkes, p. 417 n. 49.

³² L. F. Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285–1385* (London, 1986), I, 30–32.

the trade yet not all on equally strong evidence. Here again one awaits more tying of extant manuscripts to individual London makers. A quantitative analysis would certainly show that the great increase of new and lengthy compositions and translations in English towards the end of the fourteenth century, several closely associated with the court and metropolis, was matched by a conspicuous increase in production of copies of superior quality. The hands of a number of expert scribes have been identified from whose repetitive copying of new vernacular texts in handsome form accompanied by fashionable decoration it is reasonable to infer *de luxe* metropolitan production for wealthy owners, and agents who could arrange it. Kathleen Scott's two masterly volumes on the period 1390 to 1490, concluding the Survey of British illuminated manuscripts (1997), afford a wealth of guidance to book production outside as well as in and near London and Westminster. But one must say that there are many more manuscripts of modest character which could represent the activity of scribes possibly paid or else amateur ones. The late lamented Jeremy Griffiths studied groups of repeated manuscripts, the chronicle rolls, and Statutes of the Realm, which later in the fifteenth century seem to be copied by specialist scribes, and the more we recognize individual copyists multiplying the same pieces of work the more we must allow for a degree of specialization and so probably a speculative anticipation of sales, not just the predominant 'bespoke' trade, dependent on occasional commissions. In this and in variable illustration and decoration I suspect there are interesting comparisons and contrasts to be drawn with products of the trade in France and some regions of Germany in this period, but it is now more than one ageing mind can do to embrace all related scholarship Europe-wide. One big international phenomenon however has had a lot of recent attention, the making in Flanders of books of hours for other countries, especially the great numbers of Sarum use for English sale, the specific agencies for which have however yet to be discovered, though taxonomy of calendars, ruling, texts, pictures and borders can be substantiated, in relation to non-Sarum books produced by the same workshops. Quantitative codicology has quite a promising field there, if a restricted perspective.

One area of substantial recent advances is the overlap between manuscripts and early printed books, the copying of texts in either direction, the imitation and innovation in design and decoration, competition in cost and convenience, individual and institutional ownership of both, discarding and fragmentation of outmoded books, and so on. There have been proceedings published of conferences at Wolfenbüttel, 1978, and the Warburg Institute, London, 1982,³³ concerned with such questions, and a number of Bozzolo and

³³ *Book and Text in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. L. Hellenga and H. Härtel (Hamburg, 1981); *Manuscripts in the Fifty Years after the Invention of Printing*, ed. J. B. Trapp (London, 1983).

Ornato's essays are on the effects and statistics of printing, by itself not a new subject but one which they and others have made newly exciting, not least because they come to it from medieval manuscripts. The generalizations of Henri-Jean Martin and Elizabeth Eisenstein are impaired by their looking backwards from the point of view of print culture and exaggerating the differences. But the first volume of the *Histoire de l'Édition Française* (1982) does something to redress that weakness, and I trust the forthcoming relevant volume of the *History of the Book in Britain* will do more.

Another facet of manuscript study which has had a great development is the history of book-binding, structure as well as decoration, neither of which can the conscientious codicologist ignore, if he or she is to assess the date of the assembling of contents, and its locality, both of which may very possibly be post-medieval and nonetheless yield evidence of medieval history. This awareness now goes at last hand-in-glove with conservation, to which users as well as curators should not be indifferent, since we have lost surprising amounts of significant historical evidence by ill-informed repairs, even in my own lifetime, let alone earlier generations and centuries. Binding of course is not merely a matter of boards but includes the sewing in limp wrappers or tacketing of single quires, of which traces may survive within subsequent hard covers. In mentally anatomizing a codex it is wise to start from the outside of the whole, considering every section in turn, analogous to the sequence of excavation of an archaeological site.

That is one respect in which some recent catalogues of manuscripts have improved on many earlier ones, at least in attempting to date and place the present binding. Collation of quiring, distinction of separable sections, dimensions of writing space as well as of the whole leaf, number of lines, changes of hand, types of script, beginning and endings of texts however short, lists of pictures, kinds of decoration, *dicta probatoria*, inscriptions of ownership and jottings of names, are now commonly catalogued, besides authors and editions. Which side of the membrane is on the outside of the gathering and the format of paper are still often not, and you will probably each of you have your own complaints.

Nevertheless, the number of new catalogues and the detail they afford have greatly increased and continue to do so, most notably those for German libraries funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, with the on-line indexes, including also some older catalogues, available through the Deutsche Bibliothek in Berlin. There is now a summary unified index to names in the catalogues of the French provincial collections, and a fuller one to those of the British Library.³⁴ The four volumes of Ker's *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries* are at last being indexed for conventional publication, though I fear

³⁴ The full descriptions of the German catalogues are now being automated retrospectively, and all the old printed catalogues of the manuscript collections in the British Library.

not out until early in the new millennium. There have been some good American catalogues and we look forward to more. The plans and prospects for electronic cataloguing on both sides of the Atlantic, with potential benefits first advocated by Gilbert Ouy in the 1960s, only now realizable if sufficient funds are forthcoming, should not however, in my opinion, be allowed to eliminate hard-copy catalogues, for there will always be many users and uses for this form, which a machine-shackled display is unlikely to facilitate.

The most indisputably New Direction is, I suppose, digitization and hypertext display of manuscripts with the relevant descriptions and transcripts. Apart from some single manuscripts, I know of the 'Canterbury Tales' and 'Piers Plowman' projects, the Celtic Manuscripts in Oxford, and the Digital Scriptorium of 10,000 images and descriptions from Berkeley and Columbia university libraries, conceived as a prototype union catalogue of dated and datable manuscripts, besides serving other palaeographical and codicological uses. The means of creation and access to these and other similar resources are beyond our business here. Printed facsimiles of whole manuscripts have commonly, yet not always, been expensive; their multiplication has been a major stimulus and aid to study in recent decades; CD-ROM or on-line equivalents may well have the same effect.

Exhibitions, conferences, symposia, Festschriften, essays, and books on medieval manuscripts have multiplied and continue to do so, making it virtually impossible to keep up with everything which interests one. The *Gazette du Livre Médiéval* does admirably to let one know what is going on, if sometimes after the events and before actual publication, besides offering concise accounts of fresh methods of research. It is comparatively costly unless you are a member of APICES (Association Paléographique Internationale: Culture, Écriture, Société), which you all ought to be if you want to keep up with New Directions in Manuscript Studies.

I am sorry if this talk may have been rather a ramble in my backwoods than a tramp along the front of yours. I look forward to learning from the other speakers about directions that I have not recognized or ventured up.

Another Fine Manuscript Mess: Authors, Editors and Readers of *Piers Plowman*¹

C. DAVID BENSON

Scholars refer so often to the constant rewriting of *Piers Plowman* and the order of its versions (A, B, C with perhaps an earlier Z) that we sometimes forget that both are speculative assumptions drawn from puzzling manuscript evidence. *Piers Plowman* survives in over fifty manuscripts representing about a dozen distinct textual forms. For example, there are six A-manuscripts with C endings, two textual traditions of the B-version, and one manuscript that combines the three principal versions.² There is an even greater variety of presentational and commentary schemes. Several *Piers* manuscripts have more than the usual passus initials, others differently divide the several passus, and one C-manuscript contains a series of illustrations. Most *Piers* manuscripts have some form of annotation, but each program is unique – sometimes heavy, sometimes light, often by the original scribe but sometimes by a variety of later readers.³

We owe much to those who have struggled so hard to bring order out of this chaos. As a tourist from literary criticism undoubtedly in over my head in the treacherous waters of textual studies, I come not to make one more effort to tidy up the *Piers* manuscript mess but instead to celebrate it. The ‘fine mess’ of my title is not meant to be said with the sarcastic exasperation of Oliver Hardy but with admiration. My inspiration comes from Derek Pearsall, though he may not agree with my conclusions. In work that has been called ‘disciplinarily central’, Pearsall has long stressed the need for study of each element in a Middle English manuscript, regardless of editorial

¹ I wish to thank Linne Mooney, Traugott Lawler and Chandra Wells for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

² For the most recent account of the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*, see R. Hanna III, *William Langland, Authors of the Middle Ages* 3 (Aldershot, 1993). For the two different traditions of B, see especially E. T. Donaldson, ‘MSS R and F in the B-Tradition of *Piers Plowman*’, *Transactions of Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 39 (1955), 177–212, and S. Justice, ‘Introduction: Authorial Work and Literary Ideology’, in *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, ed. S. Justice and K. Kerby-Fulton (Philadelphia, 1997), pp. 1–12.

³ See C. D. Benson and L. Blanchfield, *The Manuscripts of Piers Plowman: The B-Version* (Cambridge, 1997), and M.-C. Uhart, ‘The Early Reception of *Piers Plowman*’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1986).

significance, sifting it as if it were an archaeologist's midden.⁴ The text for my homily, however, is another Pearsall dictum: 'very few things are susceptible of proof in matters of textual criticism, and meanwhile scholars might try to hold on to their lack of certainty'.⁵

I suggest that the *Piers* manuscript mess is not so much a problem to be solved as something that can provide an insight into the nature of the poem. Little is clear about the creation, reception or meaning of *Piers Plowman*. We do not know who wrote it, when it was written or for whom. Literary criticism has never found the poem any simpler than textual criticism: its exhilarating but frustrating multiplicity resists interpretation. With the poem as with its manuscripts, I want to avoid the plight of the (no doubt apocryphal) janitor who cleared away a rubbish heap in a museum gallery only to learn that he had thrown out the latest installation of a famous artist. Sometimes mess is the message – or at least one of the messages.

Mess, especially anonymous mess, has been the natural enemy of most editors of *Piers Plowman*, who seek to find an authoritative (that is authorial) text amidst the chaos of the manuscripts. The first printed edition by Robert Crowley in 1550 announced a single text as the work of a single author, one Robert Langland of Cleobury Mortimer, Shropshire – the first of many doubtful editorial claims about the writing of *Piers*.⁶ Two heroic cleaner-uppers of mess produced the next important editions of the poem: Walter Skeat and George Kane.

Before Skeat there were conflicting theories about the author and versions of *Piers*, which he replaced with a single narrative of poet and poem that had all the power and elusiveness of myth. Skeat identified three versions of *Piers*, which he arranged in chronological (and alphabetical) order keyed to the stages of a single author's life: a vigorously youthful A-text, mature B-text and somewhat doddering C-text.⁷ This sequence was announced in Skeat's first writings on *Piers*, and he was so sure of it that he never felt the need to give serious proof.⁸ His fullest statement could not be more confidently offhand: 'Now, when we proceed to place the *three* texts side by side, it is at once apparent that the B-text is *intermediate* in form between the other two; so that the order of texts must either be A, B, C or C, B, A; but the A-text so

⁴ Pearsall, 'Texts, Textual Criticism, and Fifteenth-Century Manuscript Production', in *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, ed. R. F. Yeager (Hamden, CT, 1984), p. 121. The praise is from Hanna, 'Producing Manuscripts and Editions', in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. A. J. Minnis and C. Brewer (Cambridge, 1992), p. 125 n. 42.

⁵ Pearsall, 'Authorial Revision in Some Late-Medieval English Texts', in *Crux and Controversy*, p. 44.

⁶ See the modern reprint of Crowley's *The Vision of Pierce Plowman* (London, 1976).

⁷ See, especially, Skeat in T. Warton, *The History of English Poetry*, revised edition by W. C. Hazlitt (London, 1871), pp. 245–7.

⁸ See Skeat, *Parallel Extracts from Forty-Five Manuscripts of Piers Plowman*, EETS o.s. 17, 2nd edn (London, 1885), esp. 1–2.

evidently comes *first*, that the C-text can only come *last*; and this settles the question.⁹ Skeat's brilliant myths of poet and poem have influenced all subsequent *Piers* scholarship; Steven Justice's introduction to a recent collection of essays on *Piers* shows that they are still foundational for even the most ambitious contemporary work.¹⁰

The manuscript mess so commandingly dealt with by Skeat (partly by not looking too closely; he did minimal collations) seems to have overwhelmed the conscientious R. W. Chambers, who began but could not complete any part of what would eventually become the Athlone edition.¹¹ Chambers's student George Kane, however, set about making sense of the manuscripts with an energy, originality and confidence that has influenced editing far beyond *Piers*. The author was as much a principle of order for Kane as it had been for Skeat, but his poet is a more purely aesthetic conception. Kane dismisses traditional biographies of Langland (the name does not appear on Athlone title pages) as no more than 'speculative "lives", without historical necessity'.¹² The historical poet is replaced with a more sublime figure, a genius who gradually realizes his great work of art, which the editor must rescue from the ruins created by scribal vandals.¹³

The central claim of the Athlone edition is the ability to distinguish authorial originality from scribal defacement, an assertion that Ralph Hanna and others have seen as 'hyperbole . . . not borne out by practice'.¹⁴ In fact, the Athlone editors themselves are often the best witnesses to the limits of their method. For all his confidence elsewhere in identifying the poet's writing, Kane himself admits that he cannot tell how much (if any) of the so-called John But ending to A (passus 12) is authentic.¹⁵ Similarly,

⁹ Skeat, ed., *The Visions of William Concerning Piers the Plowman . . . Text C*, EETS o.s. 54 (London, 1873), xiv (Skeat's emphasis).

¹⁰ Justice, 'Introduction', pp. 1–2. The major exception to this consensus was the argument of John Manly and his followers (now largely discounted though not really disproved), who returned to Crowley's idea of one man and one text (though for them this was the *Visio* of A) as the real *Piers Plowman*; see Manly, 'Piers the Plowman and its Sequence', in *Cambridge History of English Literature*, ed. A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller (Cambridge, 1908), pp. 1–42.

¹¹ For Chambers and much else about the editing of the poem, see Charlotte Brewer's innovative and entertaining *Editing Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹² Kane, *The Autobiographical Fallacy in Chaucer and Langland Studies*, Chambers Memorial Lecture (London, 1965); reprinted in Kane, *Chaucer and Langland* (Berkeley, 1989), p. 14.

¹³ This is a paraphrase of Pearsall's admittedly exaggerated paraphrasing of Patter-son's view of the Kane–Donaldson edition of the B-version of *Piers* ('Authorial Revision', p. 43). Kane has declared that the 'essential character of textual criticism' is 'the removal of damage, or the identification and signalling of damage, done by scribes to the language and sense of the poem as the author left it' ('The Text', in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. J. Alford (Berkeley, 1988), p. 197).

¹⁴ Hanna, 'Producing', p. 110 n. 6.

¹⁵ G. Kane, ed., *Piers Plowman: The A Version* (London, 1960; rev. 1988), pp. 51–2.

George Russell has long suggested that the final shape of the C-version was determined not by the poet himself but by a literary executor.¹⁶ But the most subversive challenge to the ambitions of the Athlone project has come from Kane's other co-editor, E. Talbot Donaldson. Donaldson's skeptical, mischievous voice is barely heard in the introduction to the Athlone B-edition, but he had already questioned its grandest claims. It was Donaldson who famously suggested that the three canonical versions of *Piers* may be no more than accidental snapshots of a more organic process of revision.¹⁷ Later he defended his and Kane's edition not on grounds of truth but because it would be 'good for intellectuation'; whether or not others approve of what they have done, Donaldson says that it 'will make them think'.¹⁸

Radical new thinking about the *Piers* manuscript mess is precisely what is needed and what we are beginning to get. All *Piers* scholars are in debt to Skeat and the Athlone editors (especially for the valuable texts they have given us), but their assumptions have tended to close off other interpretations and approaches. It is worth going back to the manuscripts to see what may have been swept under the carpet.

Perhaps the most widely held belief about the *Piers* manuscripts is that their different versions were composed in a certain order. The ABC sequence has been central to *Piers* studies since first proposed by Skeat: it is essential to the editing of Athlone, and it lies behind most analyses of Langland's literary development, as in the critical readings of Kirk and Godden or the historicist work of Middleton and others.¹⁹ Even Manly, despite his disruptive challenge to the single authorship of *Piers* at the beginning of this century,

¹⁶ Russell, 'The Evolution of a Poem: Some Reflections on the Textual Tradition of *Piers Plowman*', *Arts* (Sydney) 2 (1962), 45; Russell, 'Some Aspects of the Process of Revision in *Piers Plowman*', in *Piers Plowman: Critical Approaches*, ed. S. S. Hussey (London, 1969), p. 48; and, especially, Russell, '"As They Read It": Some Notes on Early Responses to the C-Version of *Piers Plowman*', *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 20 (1989), 175–6, 186. This position has been accepted by Kane, '"Good" and "Bad" MSS', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, Proceedings 2 (1986), 144.

¹⁷ Donaldson, 'MSS R and F', p. 211. This position is formally recanted in a footnote to Kane and Donaldson, *Piers Plowman: The B Version* (London, 1975; rev. 1988), p. 64, but others have since adopted it. See, for example, Hanna, 'Annotating *Piers Plowman*', *Text* 6 (1994), 153, and Justice, 'Introduction', pp. 5ff. Derek Pearsall, who insists that three distinct versions of *Piers* are not more likely than intermediate versions, observes that the need to accommodate the manuscripts of R and F within the B tradition produces 'some notably ingenious argumentation' by the Athlone editors ('Authorial Revision', p. 44).

¹⁸ Donaldson, '"Piers Plowman": Textual Comparison and the Question of Authorship', in *Chaucer und Seine Zeit*, ed. A. Esch (Tübingen, 1968), pp. 246 and 247.

¹⁹ E. D. Kirk, *The Dream Thought of Piers Plowman* (New Haven, 1972); M. Godden, *The Making of Piers Plowman* (London, 1990); A. Middleton, 'William Langland's "Kynde Name": Authorial Signature and Social Identity in Late Fourteenth-Century England', in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380–1530*, ed. L. Patterson (Berkeley, 1990), pp. 15–82.

accepted the traditional order of composition. The Z-text proposed by Rigg and Brewer simply adds to but does not overturn the sequence.²⁰

And yet this central understanding of the *Piers* manuscripts is supported by almost no proof and very little argument. Skeat breezily presented it as self-evident, as we saw, and Kane-Donaldson add almost nothing more. In fact they boldly (and I think correctly) weaken support for the ABC order when they reject Skeat's dating by historical allusion.²¹ As a result, Kane and Donaldson are left with only subjective assertion to justify the traditional sequence: 'Thus the order of composition of the three versions of *Piers Plowman*, however conceived, must both appear obvious, and be strictly hypothetical.'²²

For decades obviousness was apparently enough, but recently the ABC hypothesis has been challenged. In 1992, Anne Hudson, almost as an aside, asked if it were too provocative to wonder 'whether the usual sequential account of the versions of *Piers Plowman* might be, at least in part, reversible?'²³ Others soon took up the question more insistently. John Bowers showed that many problems would be solved (such as the late date of most A-manuscripts) if we assumed that A was written after B, and Jill Mann, reviving the earlier (but almost wholly neglected) work of Howard Meroney, mounted the most substantial attack ever on the traditional order of the versions of *Piers*.²⁴ Mann maintains that the A-text was not the poet's

²⁰ A. G. Rigg and C. Brewer, ed., *Piers Plowman: The Z Version* (Toronto, 1983).

²¹ See Kane and Donaldson, *B Version*, p. 71 n. 3, although such allusions have recently been used by Hanna, *William Langland*, esp. pp. 7–17.

²² Kane and Donaldson, *B Version*, p. 71. Consider their justification for believing that the A version of *Piers* was written first: 'In the absence of other considerations a natural presumption that a poem under revision will grow in content, scope and meaning, rather than diminish, must make this seem the earliest form of *Piers Plowman*' (p. 71). Not only is a 'natural presumption' not much on which to base a central hypothesis, but, as we have seen elsewhere, the central question is begged: is *Piers*, in fact, a work under revision? Kane and Donaldson conclude so without seriously examining alternatives, and what is at first labeled a hypothesis is soon treated as a certainty.

²³ Hudson, 'The Variable Text', in *Crux and Controversy*, p. 60. The same year, Robert Adams came to the brink of challenging the ABC sequence when he suggested a different order of publication, but not composition, for the three texts with A, like C, the product of a literary executor after Langland's death ('Editing *Piers Plowman B: The Imperative of an Intermittently Critical Edition*', *Studies in Bibliography* 45 (1992), 59–63).

²⁴ Bowers, 'Piers Plowman's William Langland: Editing the Text, Writing the Author's Life', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 9 (1995), 65–90; Mann, 'The Power of the Alphabet: A Reassessment of the Relation between the A and B Versions of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 8 (1994), 21–49; and Meroney, 'The Life and Death of Longe Wille', *ELH* 17 (1950), 1–35. Charlotte Brewer comments on the doubts of such as Hudson, Mann and Bowers about whether A precedes B: 'Such an enquiry is perfectly reasonable, given that our assumptions about this sequence can be traced to Skeat's commonsense, but quite unargued, assertion' ('Editing *Piers Plowman*', *Medium Aevum* 65 (1996), 287).

first version of *Piers* but a later adaption for a non-clerical audience that de-emphasized such things as Latin, metaphor and sexuality. Whether or not Mann's argument is finally accepted, it stands as the most detailed attempt yet to explain (rather than assume) the order of any version of *Piers Plowman*. Those who wish to defend the traditional sequence must not only refute Mann's case but also make a positive one of their own.²⁵ The uncertainty over sequence should prompt new explanations for the whole *Piers* manuscript mess. Such alternative narratives will not necessarily be superior to Skeat's (textual studies of *Piers* are almost as speculative as lives of Langland), but in Donaldson's terms, they are good for intellectualization and will make us think.

For example, if, with Mann, Bowers and Hudson, we are willing to put aside the belief that A is necessarily a first draft of *Piers*, we may be able to appreciate it for its own virtues. Manly and his followers considered A (or more specifically A1 – the *Visio*) a great work, in contrast to its inferior continuations, and Míceál Vaughan has recently argued the case for A's coherence again.²⁶ Certainly the A-version, in addition to some excellent unique passages (e.g., A 10.123–30), has a greater narrative clarity and more consistent social setting than other versions, and it ends just where so many modern (and perhaps medieval) readers begin to bog down.²⁷ For them A is *Piers Plowman* – or should be. Moreover, should we entertain the possibility, with Hudson, that B and C are not sequential but perhaps derived from a lost common ancestor, we will have to talk about each differently, no longer assuming a single direction of addition and subtraction.²⁸

Alternative manuscript narratives of the sort I am advocating have been offered in the past, though they have usually been constrained by adherence to the ABC sequence and were often presented (and received) as if they were less speculative than they inevitably must be. The most influential such narrative is Chambers's fifty-year-old claim that Langland abandoned the A-text in despair because he had begun to raise troubling questions about predestination and the salvation of non-Christians that it took him years to solve.²⁹ Although still widely accepted by Langland scholars, Chambers's

²⁵ For a detailed attempt, see T. Lawler, 'A Reply to Jill Mann, Reaffirming the Traditional Relation between the A and B Versions of *Piers Plowman*', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 10 (1996), 145–80. I am not here arguing against the ABC order, only against the assumption of its inevitability.

²⁶ Vaughan, 'The Ending(s) of *Piers Plowman* A', in *Suche Werkis to Werche: Essays on Piers Plowman In Honor of David C. Fowler*, ed. Míceál F. Vaughan (East Lansing, 1993), pp. 211–41.

²⁷ All citations of *Piers Plowman* are to the edition of A. V. C. Schmidt, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition*, vol. 1 (London, 1995). Spellings normalized here.

²⁸ See Hudson, 'Variable', p. 60; cf. Justice, 'Introduction', p. 8.

²⁹ Chambers, 'The Three Texts of "*Piers Plowman*", and their Grammatical Forms', *Modern Language Review* 14 (1919), 133; see especially Chambers, *Man's Unconquerable Mind* (London, 1939), pp. 129–49; and Chambers, 'Incoherencies in the A- and B-Texts of *Piers Plowman* and Their Bearing on the Authorship', *London Mediaeval*

explanation for the shape of A is by no means inevitable. The arguments that are supposed to have so perplexed the poet often turn out to be either puerile (David, Paul and Mary Magdalene do not deserve heaven because they sinned) or are soon refuted by Imaginatif with conventional responses. Chambers offers an exciting hypothesis about A, but it remains a conjecture.

Perhaps the most impressive recent textual narrative, written in response to Mann, is by Ralph Hanna III. He suggests that *Piers* began as a single dream about contemporary conditions, was next extended by a second symmetrical vision, and then developed into the A-version as we now have it. Instead of releasing this version, however, the poet immediately went on to write B, which he probably did not consider a new form. In Hanna's view, only C is such a distinct version, the poet's response to the misuse of his poem in 1381 and rewritten 'to insist upon what he meant'.³⁰ Hanna's subtle argument is precisely the reconceptualization of the *Piers* manuscripts we need.³¹ Of course, we must accept that the appeal of Hanna's account, like Skeat's original myth, depends more on its imaginative power than on real textual evidence. His narrative cannot be proved, but it does make us think.

The most important principle in making sense of the *Piers Plowman* manuscript mess has been authorial intention. Thus Kane describes the versions of *Piers* as 'a single writer's successive attempts to realize an imaginative and creative experience'.³² Similarly, as we have just seen, Chambers argues that the B-version was written to solve Langland's own spiritual crisis in A and Hanna reads C as the poet's attempt to make clear what he had really meant. In contrast, Mann asks us to go beyond the Romantic assumption that the versions of *Piers* are primarily attempts at authorial self-expression and imagine that they may have been designed for particular audiences. The surviving forms of *Piers* (perhaps there were once even more) can then be seen as rhetorical rather than merely subjective, as we might today successively adapt a basic piece of research for an encyclopedia entry, a specialized monograph or an undergraduate class. The author remains very much alive but is now seen to respond not only to an inner muse but also to external readers.

Mann's proposal that particular audiences might have been known to and addressed by the author is part of a growing scholarly interest in Langland's patrons and coteries, as shown in a recent article by Steven Justice and

Studies 1 (1937), 31. The claim of a fifteen-year gap between A and B does, of course, undercut the idea of Langland the compulsive reviser.

³⁰ Hanna, 'On the Versions of *Piers Plowman*', in *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 232–41.

³¹ Among other things, it challenges the idea (elsewhere expressed by Hanna himself) of the poet as constantly, even compulsively, revising his poem throughout his working life ('Annotating *Piers Plowman*', 153).

³² Kane, *Piers Plowman: The Evidence for Authorship* (London, 1965), p. 72.

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton that locates Langland within London bureaucratic literary circles.³³ Their evidence is often only inferential and highly speculative, but more of this kind of work needs to be done. We know little about the actual audience or audiences for whom the poet of *Piers Plowman* wrote, but we ought to try to imagine who they might have been.

For example, although the C-version is usually regarded as Langland's final act of self-expression, at least some of its features might be explained by its being addressed to a non-metropolitan audience, as suggested by the apparent origin of C-manuscripts in the area of the Malvern Hills. Perhaps, like Shakespeare, the poet actually did return to the West in old age, as so many have believed, but it is also possible that a request for his work came from an acquaintance there, to whom he supplied the best copy he could lay his hands on after revising it, before the text was changed further by Russell's 'literary executor', who need not have done his work only after the poet's death. The *Piers* produced for such an audience would not be better or worse, or necessarily final, only different. The long scholastic passage distinguishing 'mede' from 'mercede' suggests a audience with a taste for learning (C 3.332–406), but the poet may also have decided to make some things more explicit for his Western readers, whom he could have assumed to be less alert to his ironies and indirections than his familiar audience. This may explain the absence of the tearing of the pardon at the end of the *Visio*, a dramatic episode easily open to misinterpretation. Instead of such puzzles and enigmas, the poet may have judged that emotional scenes about the life of the poor and socially marginal were more appropriate for this new audience, such as the passages unique to C about needy neighbors and 'lunatic lollers' (C 9.71–161) and about the sorry narrator himself (C 5.1–104).

We may also speculate whether some of the original audiences of *Piers Plowman* heard rather than read the poem. In the Cornhill episode of C 5, the narrator claims to visit regularly a number of supporters for whom he prayed from the primer. The historian Caroline Barron assumes what few literary scholars have explored, that the poet read his poem aloud to listeners in and outside of London.³⁴ Thinking about actual contemporary performance of *Piers* (which parts would have been featured? which eliminated?) begins to suggest a different work from the one most of us know. For one thing, its humour would be more evident. I have long wondered if snippets of *Piers* might not have been retailed from the pulpit by the parish priests who seem to have been one of the poem's primary reading audiences. *Piers* is full of short alliterative phrases that would have made excellent didactic sound bites – like 'chastite withouten charite worth cheyned in helle' (B 1.188).

³³ Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Langlandian Reading Circles and the Civil Service in London and Dublin, 1380–1427', *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997), 59–83.

³⁴ Barron, 'William Langland: A London Poet', in *Chaucer's England*, ed. B. A. Hanawalt (Minneapolis, MN, 1992), pp. 91–109. See also Hanna, *William Langland*, pp. 23–4.

Perhaps we should look more closely into the surviving manuscripts for hints of such oral performances.

Although the immediate audiences for whom particular versions of *Piers* were designed remain a matter of speculation, the manuscripts do contain the responses of some of the earliest readers of the poem: the scribes who wrote, edited and annotated it. (I am using the word 'scribe' here to include the still imperfectly understood functions of manuscript corrector and supervisor.) *Piers* scribes have been treated to extremes of both praise and blame: Kane considered them banal desecrators of great poetry, whereas others have labeled them literary critics (I assume that is praise) or even co-authors.³⁵ The problem with such a debate is that it uses post-Romantic categories (authorial genius, literary critic) not really appropriate to the much messier medieval reality. Even contemporary categories of writing, such as Bonaventure's famous division of writers into mechanical scribe, compiler, commentator and original author tend to blur and overlap in the *Piers* manuscripts.³⁶ In ways I shall not try to prove here, the *Piers* poet himself adopts all four roles (scribe, compiler, commentator and author) as do the scribes. The result is that the boundaries between their work and his are more difficult to draw than assumed by the Athlone editors.³⁷

Although they do not engage in the fundamental recomposition Sylvia Huot has found in some manuscripts of the *Roman de la Rose*, the scribes of *Piers Plowman* do act like authors in creating individual lines or passages.³⁸ For example, the three main versions of *Piers* follow Mede's request that mayors accept bribes from illegal sellers of foodstuffs with a biblical warning that fire will destroy the houses of such grafters (A 3.82–9, B 3.93–100, C 3.121–6). One A-manuscript (London, British Library, MS Harley 875) adds four lines that much more pointedly warn these 'maysturs of lawe' that their souls as well as their dwellings will be at risk if they persist in such behavior.³⁹ Scribes often rewrite *Piers*, sometimes with real skill, as in a

³⁵ See Kane, 'Good and Bad', p. 139, and 'Text', p. 194. For the scribes as critics, see Pearsall, 'Texts', p. 128, and for them as co-authors, see Bowers, 'Editing', p. 68.

³⁶ For a discussion of Bonaventure's categories, see A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 2nd edn (Philadelphia, 1988), pp. 94–5.

³⁷ On this difficulty, see, for example, Pearsall, 'Editing Medieval Texts: Some Developments and Some Problems', in *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation*, ed. J. J. McGann (Chicago, 1985), p. 104; T. W. Machan, 'Middle English Text Production', in *Crux and Controversy*, pp. 5–6; Adams, 'Editing', p. 50; and Bowers, 'Editing', p. 81. And see one of the Athlone editors himself, Donaldson, who notes that although there may be a clear distinction in some of our minds between poets and scribes, 'actually the terms only describe different functions of the single animal man' ('The Texts of *Piers Plowman*: Scribes and Poets', *Modern Philology* 50 (1953), 272).

³⁸ Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers* (Cambridge, 1993).

³⁹ After A 3.89; see Kane, *A Version*, p. 46. See also T. W. Machan, 'Editing, Orality, and Late Middle English Texts', in *Vox intexta: Orality and Textuality in the Middle Ages*, ed. A. N. Doane and C. B. Pasternack (Madison, WI, 1991), p. 239.

famous early section of the Ilchester manuscript (London, University of London Library, MS S.L.V.88), and indeed sometimes so well that it has been impossible always to distinguish their work from the poet's, as in the notorious Z-version (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 851), the 'John But' ending to three A-manuscripts and the C-version as we have it.⁴⁰ Scholars cannot agree where the poet ends and the scribe begins, any more than they agree on who exactly is responsible for the various passus rubrics that are so prominent in many manuscripts.⁴¹ It might be useful in such cases to think in terms from art history, such as 'the workshop of William Langland' or 'the school of Langland'.

The recognition of even such limited scribal rewriting should make us more cautious of literary interpretations that depend on specific moments in the poem. Medieval authors knew how easily a particular line of text could disappear or be altered in even a good manuscript. Thus Theology's claim that Meed is a respectable 'mulier' born of Amends (A 2.83), which has been so crucial to modern arguments for Meed as a complex moral figure, is unavailable or even refuted by radically different readings in several A-manuscripts, including the base manuscript for the Athlone edition.⁴²

⁴⁰ For the Ilchester manuscript, see Pearsall, 'The "Ilchester" Manuscript of *Piers Plowman*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 82 (1981), 181–93, and Hanna, 'Versions', pp. 205–11. For another example of the potential closeness of author and scribe, Bowers 'imagines' (the wholly appropriate word is his) a narrative of reception and composition that extends beyond *Piers* to John But, who is said to have concluded A as a tribute to Langland and then gone on to write *Richard the Redeless* and *Mum and the Sothsayer* ('Editing', pp. 88–9).

⁴¹ These rubrics, which exist in a number of different forms in the manuscripts of all three versions, are not included in the Athlone editions and Robert Adams has called them 'the wrong-headed offspring of some mediaeval editor rather than of the author himself' ('The Reliability of the Rubrics in the B-text of *Piers Plowman*', *Medium Aevum* 54 (1985), 209); see also Adams, 'Langland's *Ordinatio*: The *Visio* and the *Vita* Once More', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 8 (1994), 51–84). Others, especially Clopper, have argued that the rubrics derive ultimately from the poet: 'The Contemplative Matrix of *Piers Plowman* B', *Modern Language Quarterly* 46 (1985), 3–28, and 'Langland's Markings for the Structure of *Piers Plowman*', *Modern Philology* 85 (1988), 245–55. Whether wrong-headed or authorial, the rubrics were an essential (and undoubtedly helpful) part of the poem for medieval readers as they are for many moderns.

⁴² For his edition Kane established the line as 'For mede is molere of [m]endis engendrit' (A 2.83), but not all manuscripts have it this way. Instead of Meed as a respectable woman ('mulier'), London, British Library, MS Harley 875 reads 'medeler' and the important Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a.1) reads 'a Iuweler', suggesting her wealth and vanity rather than her virtue (cf. A 2.96, which has other variants of 'mulier'). Instead of being engendered by 'mendes' (Amends), Kane's copy text (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.14) and four other manuscripts read 'frendis'. Another manuscript (Oxford, University College, MS 45) reads 'frendis of frendis' and still another (Dublin, Trinity College, MS D.4.12) reads 'fendes', which imply an irregular parentage indeed. On the other hand, after this line Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 733B, inserts

Although sometimes acting like an author, the *Piers* scribe is more commonly found in the role of compiler (the modern term might be editor), who, as Malcolm Parkes has shown, 'adds no matter of his own . . . but . . . is free to rearrange. . . . What he imposed was a new *ordinatio* on the materials he extracted from others.'⁴³ Many manuscripts of *Piers* are compilations of different versions, perhaps made with no other motive than to produce a fuller text: these would include the six manuscripts that add C endings to supplement A-texts, and three largely B-texts that have C and A openings.

I want briefly to mention two especially interesting B-version compilations. An early manuscript (Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201) shows how the roles in my title (poet, editor, reader) blur and overlap in the *Piers* manuscripts. The Corpus manuscript contains many examples of local scribal rewriting, including numerous unique readings that so impressed the Athlone editors that they adopted them in their own radical rewriting (as it has seemed to some) of the poem.⁴⁴ But it is as a compiler that the Corpus scribe is most active.⁴⁵ He reorganizes the standard passus divisions to give a new emphasis and unity to some of the most important narratives in the poem. Passus 3 and 4 are joined so that Meed's adventures at Westminster become a continuous story. He also makes a single unit of the Haukyn material (usually divided between passus 13 and 14 in B), as well as the three passus that tell of the confession of the folk, their plowing of the half acre and the pardon sent them from Truth.

The most complex compilation of *Piers* is San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 114, which is primarily a B-text but also contains an intelligent selection of what the experienced London scribe seems to have considered the best material from other versions of the poem, including the so-called 'autobiographical' Cornhill episode and the passage on the needy who are our neighbors.⁴⁶ Such a subtle compilation might be thought of as the

several lines from the C tradition that say Meed should be wed to truth because she represents heavenly reward. For further information, see Kane, *A Version*, p. 213, and R. W. Chambers and J. H. G. Grattan, 'The Text of "Piers Plowman"', *Modern Language Review* 4 (1909), 368–9.

⁴³ M. B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book', in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford, 1976), p. 128. See also Chambers and Grattan, who call the scribes 'not exact copyists, but editors, although working without an editor's sense of responsibility' ('Text', p. 368).

⁴⁴ See R. Sturges, 'Textual Scholarship: Ideologies of Literary Production', *Exemplaria* 3 (1991), esp. 126. For the Corpus manuscript, see James Weldon, 'Ordinatio and Genre in MS CCC 201: A Mediaeval Reading of the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*', *Florilegium* 12 (1993), 159–75.

⁴⁵ He also adds nine extra large initials of the kind usually found at passus divisions, most of which mark the introduction of significant speeches or characters, especially the sins (3.170, 3.228, 4.1, 5.60, 5.133, 5.186, 5.297, 5.386 and 10.137).

⁴⁶ G. H. Russell and V. Nathan, 'A *Piers Plowman* Manuscript in the Huntington

ultimate critical edition (blending versions as well as manuscripts) and is in fact the shape of the poem that many of us carry around in our heads.⁴⁷ This manuscript poses starkly the question of just what it is we mean when we say *Piers Plowman*. The issue may not be, as Manly and his opponents thought, whether *Piers* is the work of one or five, but whether it exists in one form or fifty. Modern editors and literary interpreters necessarily, if quixotically, try to stabilize what was still a living text in the later Middle Ages, whose staggering variety may one day be available at a keystroke in the electronic edition now being issued by Hoyt Duggan and his collaborators.

The most consistent attempt by the scribes and first readers of the poem to organize *Piers Plowman* is the least known element of the manuscripts: their various annotations. As I argued in a recent book on the B-manuscripts with Lynne Blanchfield, these records of the early reception of the poem include not only original and subsequent marginal notes, but also two other categories of original annotation: words emphasized in the text and paragraphing.⁴⁸ None of these annotations appear to be authorial and the program for each manuscript is unique.

Some scholarly attention has been paid to the marginal notes. Selections from two early programs and one late one were printed by George Russell, Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and her students have done much work on the annotations and illustrations of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104 and other C-manuscripts, and Marie-Claire Uhart heroically provided a list of the marginal notes in all *Piers* manuscripts.⁴⁹ This valuable work may give a misleading impression, however. Russell and Kerby-Fulton deal only with C-manuscripts and the examples they choose have unusually full and frequent notes. Only one A-manuscript, for example, a late one, has many marginal notes (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 145). Moreover, even when they are frequent, the great majority of *Piers* notes do not rise to the level of proper medieval commentary glosses, but often consist of no more than a single word or a *nota*.⁵⁰

Library', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26 (1963), 119–30. See also A. I. Doyle, 'Remarks on Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*', in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. G. Kratzmann and J. Simpson (Cambridge, 1986), p. 41.

⁴⁷ Hanna, 'The Scribe of Huntington HM 114', *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989), notes that the scribe 'arrogates to himself the powers of a modern eclectic editor' (p. 121).

⁴⁸ Benson and Blanchfield, *Manuscripts*. See especially my Introduction. Pearsall noted that 'all manuscript marginalia have their interest, even though they may be of much later date than the manuscript itself' ('Texts', p. 131).

⁴⁹ G. H. Russell, 'Some Early Responses to the C-Version of *Piers Plowman*', *Viator* 15 (1984), 275–300; Uhart, *Early Reception*. See most recently K. Kerby-Fulton and D. L. Despres, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: The Politics of Book Production in the Douce Piers Plowman* (Minneapolis, MN, 1999).

⁵⁰ Russell notes that the annotation in two C manuscripts he studied is not 'esoteric or pretentious' but is 'an unambitious attempt to make the text more accessible to an undemanding but earnest reader' ('Some Early Responses', p. 280).

The two other categories of *Piers* annotation (emphasized words and paragraph signs) have received almost no scholarly attention, though they form a significant response to the text, especially in B- and C-manuscripts, and must be a part of any complete study.⁵¹ Readers of *Piers* are familiar with the use of Latin quotations in the poem, which are indicated by italics in modern editions, but individual words (especially proper names like Piers or Meed, geographical places like Jerusalem, and abstract concepts like the three do's) are also frequently emphasized in the manuscripts by underlining, boxing, highlighting or actually writing the words in red.

Also common in the *Piers* manuscripts is paragraphing, which is indicated by signs, marks for signs or spacing. In contrast to paragraphs that merely separate stanzas, as in manuscripts of Chaucer's *Troilus* or modern paragraphing, this form of annotation also calls attention to particular moments in the text, such as the items in a list, the introduction of a new character and significant or dramatic lines.

These four forms of annotations (original notes, later notes, emphasized words and paragraphing) cannot be considered separately. There is no meaningful distinction between a word emphasized in the text and a note that copies the same word from the text and puts it in the margin, or between a marginal *nota bene* and a paragraph sign at the same line. Different manuscripts will use different forms of annotations to mark the same moments in the text, and a single manuscript may at times use different annotation types for the same effect.

The annotations in *Piers* manuscripts tend to be brief and sometimes opaque responses to the literal level of the text. Rather than deep analysis, the scribes and readers are engaged in the practical job of making the text more manageable, somewhat like the way we mark up a text we are about to teach with underlining, symbols and brief notes. These annotations range all the way from isolated paragraph signs and single words in the text to one expansive and spectacularly misguided late note next to the dreamer's account in C 5 of his family life on Cornhill: 'Pers dwelled in Cornwell with his friend Christofoer or his wyf Catte – in there beds had a vision' (London, British Library, MS Additional 35157, fol. 28b). For all their elusiveness, the annotations are the best early records we have of individual responses to *Piers Plowman* as well as of its general reception. Each manuscript has its own set of annotations, so that even closely affiliated manuscripts differ. As brief as an individual annotation may be, it is the deliberate act of an individual scribe, even in the case of the lowly paragraph. Paragraphing varies greatly from one manuscript to another, but whether light or heavy, it consistently reveals an alert response to the text.

Piers annotations also indicate the collective interests of its early readers,

⁵¹ A brief exception is Russell, 'Some Early Responses', p. 284. See my Introduction and listing of both words and paragraphs in Benson and Blanchfield, *Manuscripts*.

which are not always ours. For example, unlike modern critics, the scribes show little curiosity about the poet's sources or theological positions, but they do extensively mark the seven deadly sins, proverbs, prophecies, different genres of discourse and examples of ecclesiastical abuse.

Morton Bloomfield once famously called *Piers* a commentary on an unknown work; the annotations (early notes, later notes, words and paragraph signs) are a largely unknown but valuable commentary on *Piers*. Because the annotations are difficult to recover, multilayered and non-authorial, they have been largely excluded from the editing of *Piers* since Crowley, who wrote his own set of marginal notes. Skeat ignored them altogether, though his later edition of Chaucer included what he may have considered authorial glosses. The Athlone editions tell us so much about the manuscripts of *Piers*, but they say almost nothing about the annotation. An occasional note is mentioned, but rubricated words are not indicated except for longer Latin quotations and there is no paragraphing whatsoever. The absence of scribal annotation in the Athlone edition misrepresents the medieval manuscript in pursuit of an ideal authorial text.⁵²

I have tried here to encourage skepticism about the traditional explanations of the *Piers* manuscript mess and to support new thinking about it that is already underway. I have also urged that our attention should extend beyond the author to others: audiences to whom particular versions may have been addressed, scribes whose activities often parallel those of the poet, and annotators who record the responses of early readers. Although the work of the annotators has been largely ignored by modern editors and scholars, what they do in the manuscripts is most like what we do today, textual and literary critics alike. The annotators did not create *Piers Plowman*, but, like us, they try to make sense out of it. They try to stabilize and organize the poem, to produce a coherent interpretation from its many discourses, which are at once capacious and contradictory, interactive and elusive, passionate and deconstructing. Such attempts to bring order to the poem are as necessary as they are impossible. The *Piers Plowman* manuscripts are a reminder that the poem itself, in one text or many, has engaged (or enraged) so many because it contains much of the messiness and mystery of human life itself.

⁵² Perhaps this is because Kane's first Athlone edition was the A-version, whose manuscripts are lightly annotated. His base manuscript (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.14) is especially virginal, with no emphasized words, no paragraph marks and virtually no original or later marginal notes. As others have noted, Kane's initial decisions with A often determined his later practice even in the face of other evidence.

A New Approach to the Witnesses and Text of the *Canterbury Tales*

N. F. BLAKE

The *Canterbury Tales* has been edited regularly since Caxton's first edition in 1476 [Cx1], but it was only in the nineteenth century that serious discussion of the textual problems commenced.¹ This debate was inspired by the renewed interest in textual and antiquarian studies as well as by the discovery of the Ellesmere [El] and Hengwrt [Hg] manuscripts.² From then on El became most editors' base manuscript. The Chaucer Society published studies on the poem's text and issued transcripts of early *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts considered central to the textual tradition. Apart from El and Hg, these included Cambridge University Library MSS Gg 4.27 [Gg] and Dd 4.24 [Dd], British Library MSS Harley 7334 [Ha⁴] and Lansdowne 851 [La], Corpus Christi College Oxford MS 198 [Cp], and Petworth House, Sussex MS 7 [Pw]. At this time Skeat published his edition of Chaucer, which used El as the base for his text of and spellings in the *Canterbury Tales*,³ and went on to write an important study on the early textual history of the poem which, as it dealt with only a few early manuscripts, is of limited usefulness.⁴ Other studies of the poem's text followed, including that of Brusendorff, who also used a restricted number of manuscripts.⁵

In the 1920s John M. Manly and Edith Rickert established a research programme to record and examine all manuscripts and incunabula of the *Canterbury Tales* and this led to the publication of their eight-volume edition in 1940.⁶ Volume one contains descriptions of all fifteenth-century witnesses,

¹ *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. P. G. Ruggiers (Norman, OK, 1984).

² El is Huntington Library (San Marino, CA) MS 26. C. 12 and Hg is National Library of Wales (Aberystwyth) MS Hengwrt 154 (Peniarth 392 D). All witnesses of the *Canterbury Tales* are given the sigils now customarily used for them and a list of these sigils may be found in *The Canterbury Tales Project: Occasional Papers Volume II*, ed. N. F. Blake and P. Robinson, Office for Humanities Communication Publications 9 (Oxford, 1997), pp. 180–1.

³ *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. W. W. Skeat, 7 vols. (Oxford, 1894–7).

⁴ W. W. Skeat, *The Evolution of the Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer Society 2nd ser. 38 (London, 1907).

⁵ A. Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition* (Oxford, 1925).

⁶ *The Text of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. J. M. Manly and E. Rickert, 8 vols. (Chicago, 1940).

except Caxton's second edition, c. 1482 [Cx2].⁷ Volume two contains the textual affiliations of these witnesses. These are complicated for the editors concluded that some manuscripts were compiled from a number of different copytexts, which indicated that a large number of copytexts had since been lost. Volumes three and four contain the text, which reflects the poem not so much as it existed in Chaucer's draft, but in the fair copy which formed the ancestor of the individual fragments. Volumes five to eight contain the apparatus criticus, which provides the evidence for the conclusions outlined in volume two.

The difficulties of this edition arise partly through the nature of the task and partly through the haste forced on the editors towards the project's conclusion.⁸ There are about 20,000 lines in the poem and over sixty complete witnesses, as well as many fragments or excerpts. Handling this extensive range of variation recorded in paper form presented severe logistical problems. Manly and Rickert acquired rotographs of all manuscripts and incunabula known to them, which allowed them to work from the actual texts in the witnesses.⁹ Beside various anomalous manuscripts like Hg and Ha⁴, the witnesses fell into four major groups which they labelled *a*, *b*, *c* and *d*. Their inability to work out the relationship of the anomalous manuscripts, fundamental in determining the early history of the text, and their decision to allocate all other manuscripts to one of their four groups led to complicated stemmas which made it difficult to establish a base text. No single manuscript was claimed as their base. They relied heavily upon both Hg and El, with a preference for the former, which has led later scholars to assume that Hg was their base. Their four major witness groups, with some modifications suggested by Dempster,¹⁰ have been largely accepted until recently. They accepted that all manuscripts of the poem, which was incomplete when he died, post-date Chaucer's death in 1400, and so none reflects his final intentions, for he was still working on it at his death. The manuscript variation of tale order is the work of scribes and editors trying to make sense of the fragments they had. Each fifteenth-century editor tried to construct as coherent a poem as possible from diverse fragments whose order had not been finalized by the poet. This situation led Manly and Rickert to posit prior circulation of individual tales

⁷ This was omitted because T. F. Dunn, their student, presented his Ph.D. thesis in 1939, subsequently printed as *The Manuscript Source of Caxton's Second Edition of the Canterbury Tales* (Chicago, 1940).

⁸ For comments on their work, see G. Kane, 'John Manly', in Ruggiers 1984, pp. 207–29, N. F. Blake, 'The Editorial Assumptions in the Manly–Rickert Edition of *The Canterbury Tales*', *English Studies* 64 (1983), 385–400, and R. V. Ramsey, *The Manly–Rickert Text of the Canterbury Tales* (Lewiston, Queenston and Lampeter, 1994).

⁹ Copies of these are deposited in Chicago University Library and the British Library.

¹⁰ As in G. Dempster, 'The Fifteenth-Century Editors of the *Canterbury Tales* and the Problem of Tale-Order', *PMLA* 64 (1949), 1123–42.

by Chaucer and two types of manuscript production, shop production and the work of individual scribes.

Earlier scholars had not assumed that all manuscripts post-dated Chaucer's death, though the Manly–Rickert position was largely unquestioned until the recent work of Kathleen Scott on the re-dating of the manuscripts.¹¹ Doyle and Parkes have shown that shop production was not a feature of fifteenth-century manuscript provision, since manuscripts were produced ad hoc for individual purchasers.¹² Manly and Rickert's edition has not dislodged El as the favoured base text of editors largely because of its preferred order, though the occasional edition has used Hg. However, later editors who use El as their base have increasingly incorporated readings from Hg so that, although the El order remains the preferred one, Hg readings have become commoner. The multi-volume *Chaucer Variorum* edited by Paul G. Ruggiers, for example, uses Hg as its base, though it follows the traditional lineation based on El and incorporates many lines and passages from El that are not in Hg. It also provides variants for only ten early witnesses as well as readings in printed editions.

Most modern editions lack an editorial policy justified by the manuscript tradition, because the Manly–Rickert conclusions are regarded with some scepticism. But criticism of their work has focussed on their methodology rather than their results. Their attempt to establish the text of O, the fair copy made after Chaucer's death, is regarded as incompatible with their attempt to apply a stemmatic technique to material from different manuscript versions of individual tales circulating independently prior to Chaucer's death. One implies a single source and the other multiple sources. Furthermore, it is difficult to criticize their conclusions on the manuscript tradition without re-doing much of their work. But this is impossible because the apparatus criticus of volumes five to eight does not make it possible to extrapolate why individual manuscripts read what they do, because the context for the changes is not provided. An apparatus criticus divides the material into discrete units consisting of single words or phrases, but the reason a scribe might change the word or phrase has often to be sought outside this discrete unit. It is this apparatus criticus which has made all later scribes look as though they were incompetents tampering with the text, because the reasons for their handling of the text cannot be extracted intelligibly from the apparatus criticus. Hence, the evidence of later manuscripts has been undervalued ever since the publication of the Manly–Rickert edition.

¹¹ 'An Hours and Psalter by Two Ellesmere Illuminators', in *The Ellesmere Manuscript: Essays in Interpretation*, ed. M. Stevens and D. Woodward (San Marino, CA, and Tokyo, 1996), pp. 87–119.

¹² See especially A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts, and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 163–210.

Transcriptions of some manuscripts made available by the Chaucer Society, taken by many scholars as accurate, have misled some into making erroneous claims. Facsimiles have also appeared. Although E1 was first produced in facsimile in 1911, since the seventies facsimiles of several manuscripts have appeared. They provide scholars with a useful resource, but they are expensive and they are so few that a full assessment of the textual tradition is impossible. Manuscripts in private hands in different parts of the world may be difficult for individual scholars to gain access to, and the cost of acquiring microfilms or of visiting libraries where the manuscripts are housed can be considerable.

Because of this situation the *Canterbury Tales* Project was established under Norman Blake and Peter Robinson with the text as its primary focus to give editors and others access to all witnesses of the poem to enable them to study the development of the text with all the evidence. The project's four cardinal features are its electronic basis, the transcription of all witnesses, the digitization of all manuscripts, and the wide dissemination of the project's material and results.

The large number of witnesses of the *Canterbury Tales* and their complicated relationship dictated that the project had to rely on electronic technology. Once a text is transcribed electronically, it is possible to recall it quickly and easily and to compare its readings with other electronic material through hyperlinks. Since the variations in handwriting prevent computers from reading texts in facsimile, the use of electronic technology dictates that transcriptions be made available. The transcriptions are expensive to produce, since they involve human labour with several checks to make them as accurate as possible. The transcripts need to be encoded so that their material is accessible, and the encoding will determine how the material can be exploited. We use internationally recognized encoding systems such as SGML. In order to use the transcripts for comparative stemmatic ends, there must be a lineation which allows the computer to recognize which line in which witness has to be compared with the equivalent line in all other witnesses.¹³ This has involved decisions as to whether a line in a witness is meant to be the same as that in the base text or whether it is an alteration – something which is not always self-evident. The general principle behind this lineation is that only pieces which occur as complete units in all extant witnesses share the same lineation; if a unit is broken up in only a single witness, then the parts are treated as independent pieces. Although it may make it difficult for those familiar with the traditional lineation to assimilate, this new lineation allows different units to be published as complete entities and prevents users of the published material assuming that the traditional order is necessarily the right one. This fragmentation of the traditional order

¹³ See further N. F. Blake, 'The Project's Lineation System', in *Occasional Papers II*, ed. Blake and Robinson, pp. 5–14.

carries an important message: readers of the *Canterbury Tales* cannot take the results of past scholarship and familiar landmarks as established facts.

Since images of the manuscripts accompany the transcripts, electronic technology allows a transcript and its original to be placed side by side on the screen. Hyperlinks also enable different transcriptions to be set side by side. Users can check any spelling in any manuscript so that data on the language of individual scribes can be compiled accurately, which has not been feasible hitherto. It is also necessary to provide a line-by-line collation in both the original and a regularized spelling, since the latter is needed for the creation of a textual stemma. Stemmas can be constructed for any length of text, from a line to a whole unit. The electronic data can be accessed through a number of different channels: the base text (which is used as the finding device), the individual transcripts, the collations or the spelling databases. As computer programs develop, further ways of exploiting the material will become available. The relationship between the various manuscripts was undertaken using the computer programs Phylogenetic Analysis Using Parsimony [PAUP] and COLLATE, but future CD-ROMs will use the programs SPLITSTREES and Variant Database [VBASE]. An important new feature will be an analysis workshop to allow users to make their own stemmas of any or all witnesses or sections of them following the guidelines incorporated on the CD-ROM. Although we hope to place the data on the web in future, the web will not have the additional tools such as the workshop.

The electronic medium has the great advantage that it makes all witnesses of equal value and it does not, as so many previous studies have done, prioritize a small group of early manuscripts. It should allow the debate about the text and order of the *Canterbury Tales* to move beyond the restriction of the relationship between Hg and El – a feature of so much discussion of the text. The project has already shown that some manuscripts which are not early, such as Christ Church Oxford MS 152 [Ch], may well be significant in the textual history of the poem, and it may allow, for example, a fuller understanding of the nature of the good manuscript which Caxton used to correct his first edition of the poem to produce Cx2.

The transcriptions might be described as the engine fuel for the computer programs in that they supply the raw data. In principle transcriptions of the witnesses should be fully diplomatic, but the project's emphasis on establishing the text makes a graphetic representation of every letter form unnecessary. For example, we have accepted that the different varieties of <s> or <e> do not need to be distinguished to establish the textual relationship of witnesses. We aim at a faithful, graphemic transcription of the spellings of the witnesses. A graphetic transcription would be immensely expensive and time-consuming because the transcribers would find many examples where they could not decide which particular form of a letter such as <s> was intended. The advantage a transcription has over a facsimile is it allows the computer to read and compare the texts. But with a graphetic transcription we would for

stemmatic purposes have to instruct the computer to ignore variations in letter shapes in order to produce its collations and stemmas. The transcription has to be a compromise among three features: the ability of the transcribers to read and interpret the witness spellings with reasonable facility, the demands of the electronic medium, and the desire to make the transcripts as diplomatic as possible. Manuscripts of the poem are scattered throughout the world and transcribers wherever they are working have to rely on some kind of reproduction, usually print-outs from microfilm. The quality of such print-outs makes it difficult to decipher sometimes what a manuscript reads, and that applies even when the transcription is read against the original.

These problems dictated a graphemic system for the spellings in the witnesses. We created computer forms for some traditional graphs such as ⟨p⟩, for certain variants such as crossed ⟨l⟩ or ⟨h⟩, and for abbreviations so that they reflected what was in the witnesses. The misinterpretation by a scribe of an abbreviation, as at 1:2039 [A2037],¹⁴ might be a factor in determining textual relationships. We retained as far as possible the punctuation in the witnesses such as the virgule and punctus, as well as the tails and flourishes found on individual letters. It is difficult in some manuscripts to decide whether a stroke formed a virgule, a tail or a flourish. In some manuscripts such as La, virgules occur so frequently (essentially after every word) that we stopped transcribing them after a time. When this happened, a note has been added to this effect to the transcript. Checks on the transcriptions were built into the system. The transcript of each witness is preceded by notes outlining the features which the transcribers regarded as problematic in that witness so that users are alerted to its difficulties and their resolution. Individual lines or words are provided with a hyperlink note where the reading is uncertain or the manuscript contains something illegible, crossed out or smudged. Bleed-through, for example, can cause problems in reading. Wherever possible, the transcript has been checked twice against the microfilm print-out and once against the original. The presence of each manuscript page in facsimile allows the user to check for accuracy. Transcribers are human and we recognize that mistakes in transcription will occur. Indeed, we have sometimes found them when making linguistic studies, where a particular form seemed aberrant; we discovered that some of these aberrations were actually faulty transcriptions. Users of the electronic material are encouraged to check readings which form a significant part of their argument against the digitized images to make sure they are not misled by a fault in transcription.

It will already have become clear why digitized images accompany the transcriptions. But what is important to note is that every page of every

¹⁴ In this article the first reference is to the lineation in *Geoffrey Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales Edited from the Hengwrt Manuscript*, ed. N. F. Blake (London, 1980) and the second in brackets is from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L. D. Benson (Boston, 1987).

witness is digitized; no distinction is made between potentially good or potentially bad witnesses. For the purposes of the text all are treated equally. As the main emphasis of the project is the text, the quality of the digitization is sufficient to check the transcription. As with all facsimile reproduction, it is not possible to check features which might seem desirable to palaeographers, such as quiring, watermarks of paper or hair/flesh side of vellum. But unlike conventional facsimiles on paper, digitization allows the user to increase the magnification of discrete sections of the text to assist the interpretation of the marks on the page. It is not necessary to have high-grade reproductions for the purposes of textual correction and the images are usually made from microfilms of the original manuscripts at a relatively low dpi. Consequently, digitization is cheaper and acquiring permissions for reproduction is easier than for traditional facimile production. Microfilms are already available for most of the witnesses and so no further photography of the original witnesses is required, which means less wear and tear on them – a fact appreciated by owners of the witnesses. The digitized images allow the study of features like punctuation and abbreviations, but the former may be difficult to read because the faint marks which may be punctuation easily become corrupted in the process we have followed.

The aim of the project is to make the original witnesses available to scholars and others through electronic publication so that the project's workers and other scholars can exploit them for editorial, linguistic and other purposes. Electronic publication will take the form of individual CD-ROMs and/or dissemination of the material on the web. The present publishers are Cambridge University Press, who issued the first CD-ROM on the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' in 1996. It was published at a price which makes it possible for individual scholars to buy and is certainly much less than the price demanded for many other scholarly CD-ROMs. This contains a complete description of each witness, compiled by Dan Mosser, the transcription of all texts with images of every page, notes about each transcription, a transcription of all the glosses, prepared by Stephen Partridge, with hyperlinks to the transcribed text, regularized and unregularized collations, and a database of the spellings of each manuscript individually and of all the witnesses. Readings of and spellings in the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' can be accessed through the base text or any individual transcription. For example, clicking with the mouse on a line number would bring up that line in all the witnesses, and then clicking on the sigil of an individual manuscript would bring up that line in the context of the rest of the folio in that witness. This is important in trying to understand why a particular scribe may have changed a reading, for the explanation may have to be sought in the context of what he was doing more broadly to the text. The spelling databases allow the user to go back to the individual witness readings. The collations of each line in the regularized form allow the computer to sort the lines out stemmatically without the interference of variant spellings which are not significant from an

editorial point of view. Finally, some articles relevant to the text and the CD-ROM are reproduced, and an extensive bibliography, prepared by Dan Mosser principally to support the description of the witnesses, is provided. What is not available on the first CD-ROM is any program that allows the user to manipulate the material; but this will change with future CD-ROMs.

The programs of the future will allow users of the electronic data to study the relationship of the witnesses over any number of lines so that a user could compare a complete unit by itself or a certain number of lines within that unit. Peter Robinson in one of his published articles has examined the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' stemmatically both as a whole and in hundred-line units.¹⁵ Two things need to be understood from this analysis. The first is that the programs used provide the raw data for a stemmatic diagram, but it is then up to the researcher to go through all the examples, which form the basis for the computer's analysis and which it will list in detail, to determine whether the stemma is soundly based. One should not necessarily trust the computer, which will merely carry out the instructions it is given. It may be that some of the evidence which it has used does not carry sufficient weight to justify the decisions it has reached. The second is that if one breaks the data into smaller units, such as a hundred lines each, there may not be sufficient evidence in any given hundred-line sequence to make a firm decision as to relationship. This may lead the computer to make decisions which are unsustainable. However, any conclusions reached in this way would be no different from those used by a scholar working with data in paper form. If there is insufficient material, then neither the computer nor the individual scholar will be able to reach a firm conclusion. However, the important point to bear in mind is that, as with any program, the computer will present the scholar with data arranged to fulfil the request made to it. This data should be considered as material presented in a form which can then be sifted and checked to make sure that it is acceptable for stemmatic purposes. For instance, if the program works on the data with the punctuation recorded in the transcriptions, the stemmas will potentially be distorted because the punctuation may skew the evidence in particular ways. A scribe who wrote more than one manuscript might insert the same type of punctuation irrespective of what copytext he was using. It is important to remember that the computer does not diminish the need for human editorial expertise. It merely presents the data in a way which makes it easier for scholars to handle by focussing on those items which are potentially significant for the witness relationships. But those relationships need to be checked and verified.

The program PAUP has the weakness that it always shows the witness relationships on a bifurcating model, even though the length of the arm to

¹⁵ 'A Stemmatic Analysis of the Fifteenth-Century Witnesses to the Wife of Bath's Prologue', in *Occasional Papers II*, ed. Blake and Robinson, pp. 69–132.

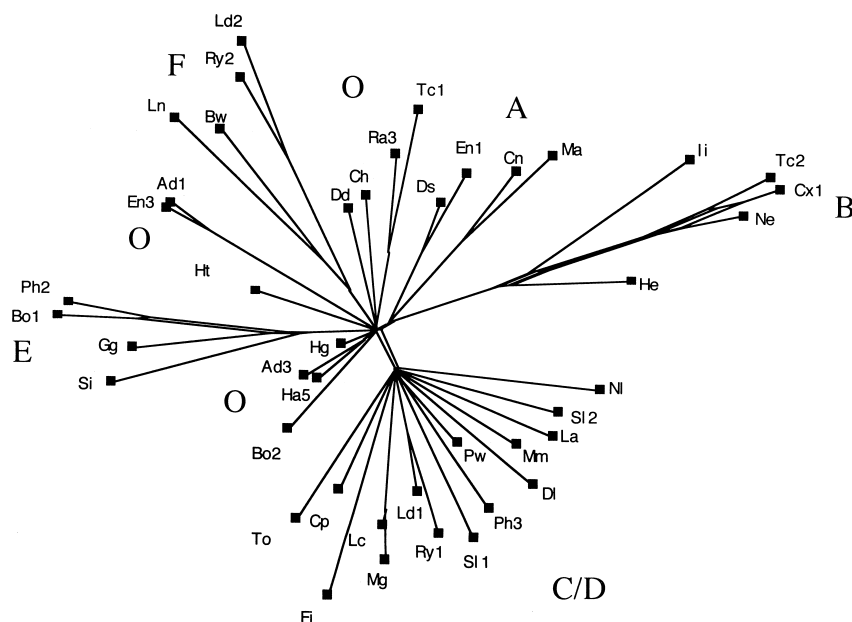


Fig. 1 Relationships of the manuscripts of the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' as organized by the SplitsTrees Program.

each individual witness gives some indication of the distance of that witness to the nodal point. Such bifurcation has often been criticized by textual scholars as unsatisfactory, because it is unlikely that the witnesses always follow this model in reality. However, the SPLITSTREES program presents the witness relationships springing from a central point or points with some arms from this central point sprouting subsidiary arms, as illustrated in Fig. 1. This may well present the data in a more reliable, or at least less deterministic, way.

The results obtained so far from the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' and the 'General Prologue' suggest that there is a close relationship between Hg and El, but that in the former El appears to have changed its copytext roughly halfway through and so is a less reliable witness for that part of the text. Hence El does not appear in the stemma of Fig. 1. In addition there are a number of manuscripts, not all of them early, which have a close relationship to Hg and these for the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' we refer to as the O Group. Their evidence should be taken into account in editing the poem, though not all of these witnesses may be members of O Group in all tales. Analysis of the 'General Prologue' indicates that El and Hg are very close textually right through this section of the poem and that either could be used as a base text for a modern edition, though the evidence from both needs to be evaluated.

At present Hg appears to be the best manuscript to use as base text, but it is not free from scribal errors. In those parts of the poem where Hg and El are close, it is possible to check and, if necessary, correct Hg from El and manuscripts of the O Group. In such a situation, the evidence of El could take precedence over that of the O Group, but otherwise the reverse would be true. Any evidence gleaned from this comparison should be checked against the other early manuscripts and as a final step against the evidence of the other witnesses. In other words, early analyses suggest stages which an editor could follow: the evidence of Hg, its readings checked against El and the O Group, against the other early manuscripts, and against the remaining witnesses.¹⁶ Naturally the later stages will be less significant where Hg agrees with El and the O Group, since that agreement would be a reasonable sign that the reading was found in the archetype even if it cannot be proved that the archetype dates from Chaucer's own lifetime.

The question of whether any of the existing manuscripts date from Chaucer's own lifetime has been re-opened through the work of Kathleen Scott, as noted earlier (n. 11). Before the publication of Manly and Rickert's edition in 1940, it was accepted that some manuscripts could date from before 1400. Skeat thought Hg, Cp, Ha4 and Pw were written in Chaucer's lifetime, while El he dated shortly after Chaucer's death. Other scholars like Tatlock thought that Ha4 had a text which indicated scribal tampering, and although that did not mean it was necessarily post-1400 it certainly did nothing to discourage that view.¹⁷ The concept of post-1400 publication arose because Manly and Rickert believed that all extant manuscripts were compiled from a number of freely circulating tales or fragments and that none of these could have been put together to produce a complete poem before Chaucer died. This view has been supported by later scholars such as Doyle and Parkes, who accepted that Hg is the earliest extant manuscript and assumed it was written after Chaucer's death because of its muddled order and of the scribal note in the margin of Hg about the incompleteness of the 'Cook's Tale'. Kathleen Scott's suggestion that the evidence for dating all manuscripts post-1400 be re-examined has now been followed up.¹⁸ It is, however, not a specific part of the project's work to examine the dating of the manuscripts since it presents the evidence of all witnesses whatever their date. But the proposals about editing put forward in the previous paragraph may need to be re-considered since a new dating might affect the conclusions reached and thus influence an editor's procedure. However, it is not the project's aim, as some

¹⁶ For further discussion of this point see N. F. Blake, 'Editing the *Canterbury Tales*: Preliminary Observations', *Anglia* 116 (1998), 198–214.

¹⁷ For a discussion and full references to the work of these and other scholars on the textual history of the poem see N. F. Blake, *The Textual Tradition of the Canterbury Tales* (London, 1985).

¹⁸ N. F. Blake, 'Geoffrey Chaucer and the Manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*', *Journal of the Early Book Society* 1 (1997 [1998]), 96–122.

have assumed, to establish the text as it left Chaucer's pen. We accept that at best we may (and I emphasize may) be able to reconstruct the text at the time of Chaucer's death or soon thereafter. But we do claim that the data collected electronically through the project will enable future editors to construct a text which reflects the evidence of the witnesses more reliably than hitherto.

The data collected in the first CD-ROM and in the electronic transcripts of individual witnesses, which are completed but not yet published, has so far provided the basis for two other types of study, and no doubt other forms of exploiting the material will be found as time goes by. Although the main purpose of the project was the study and establishment of the text, these other studies show that the data can be used for different purposes. The two I shall concentrate on here are the study of metre and investigations into fifteenth-century English. Both are able to exploit a feature of the project which set them apart from similar studies. That feature is that the data consists of multiple copies made during the fifteenth century of the same text. Extant studies of metre and language in the fifteenth century have concentrated on material drawn from a variety of different texts, as is true for example of the Helsinki Corpus and studies based on it. While this Corpus has many benefits, it has the disadvantage that it draws on texts from different genres written at different times. It is consequently difficult to tell whether any changes are caused, for example, by the genre rather than by developments in the language. Elizabeth Solopova has looked at the metre in Hg, El, Dd, Gg, Cp and Ha4, and concluded that there were stylistic alterations in El, Dd and Ha4 and metrical changes in Ha4. Her analysis suggested that these changes were made very early, but cannot be attributed to Chaucer himself.¹⁹

John Fisher and his collaborators have outlined the development of Chancery English through studying the documents which were issued from and copied in the Chancery in the fifteenth century.²⁰ It has been claimed that Chancery English spread to other parts of the country during the fifteenth century. It has been possible to evaluate this claim from the evidence collected in the project to see whether the language of a single text which was copied numerous times was changed to make the language conform to the preferences of the Chancery scribes. Since the scribes were copying a single text and hence the basis of what they were working from is known, the way in which the spelling is altered should give some indication of the spread of Chancery English. The result of one study has been to suggest that the claims made for the influence of Chancery English in the fifteenth century have been exaggerated.²¹ Although it is possible to see some

¹⁹ 'Chaucer's Metre and Scribal Editing in the Early Manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*', in *Occasional Papers II*, ed. Blake and Robinson, pp. 143–64.

²⁰ *An Anthology of Chancery English*, ed. J. H. Fisher et al. (Knoxville, 1984), pp. 26–62.

²¹ N. F. Blake, 'Chancery English and the Wife of Bath's Prologue', in *To Explain the Present: Studies in the Changing English Language in Honour of Matti Rissanen*, ed. T. Nevalainen and L. Kahlas-Tarkka (Helsinki, 1997), pp. 3–24.

influence of this variety, it is not as marked as we might have expected. Thus the change of *swich(e)* forms in Hg to Chancery *such(e)* in other early fifteenth-century manuscripts is striking. However, other forms such as the retention of the negator *nat* rather than the Chancery preference *not* and of the present indicative form of the modal *wol* rather than the preferred Chancery form *wil* show that not all Chancery forms were adopted by scribes of the *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts. In fact, the spelling *nat* is found regularly even in manuscripts written in London and the East Midlands, which should have been most susceptible to the influence of Chancery spellings. Even when Hg has spellings such as *shal* which are the same as those found in Chancery documents, many later scribes change the spelling to conform with their own, different systems; in this case spellings with ⟨sch⟩, *schal*, are common in later manuscripts. This study concludes 'if the pull of this new standard was as strong as suggested by Fisher, one might perhaps have expected rather more standardisation than one actually finds' (p. 22).

A different type of spelling investigation has been offered by Simon Horobin who has tried to focus on Chaucer's spelling preferences.²² He has shown how previous scholars have used incomplete or unreliable data, either because the difficulty of consulting manuscripts led to the need to rely on transcriptions, which can be inaccurate, or because the difficulty of searching through whole manuscripts in hard copy means that scholars base their results on a sample of the spellings in a given manuscript, which necessarily means the data is incomplete. This is why previous scholars have arrived at incompatible conclusions. He has shown that certain spellings cluster in particular tales and that these spelling clusters can be detected in many early manuscripts. This may help us to come to some understanding of Chaucer's own spellings and also help editorially in the detection of changes in or the continued use of manuscript copytexts.

The use of the computer will give new impetus to the study of Middle English texts, especially of those which exist in multiple copies with a complex stemma and with evidence of revision, whether authorial or scribal. It enables scholars to check the work of editors and to study the changes made in later manuscripts with the complete evidence available. It also puts the study of language and metre on a new footing. Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that computers provide the data and can suggest conclusions, but they will never make the human editor redundant. Transcription of texts electronically is also expensive and time-consuming, and should always be supported by digitized images, for not only is it important to check the transcriptions for possible errors, but there is also significant information to be gleaned about a text in a manuscript from its *ordinatio*.

²² 'A New Approach to Chaucer's Spelling', *English Studies* 79 (1998), 415–24.

Prospecting in the Archives: Middle English Verse in Record Repositories

JULIA BOFFEY

Most of those who work with Middle English manuscripts will have some knowledge of the events which took place in Winchester School in June 1934. The Friends of the National Libraries were to visit the Fellows Library, and W. F. Oakeshott, who was at that time School Librarian and an assistant master, had prepared an exhibition for them and included in it MS 13, which he realized might hold some interest:

The safe where the manuscripts were kept was not in the gallery, but in the warden's bedroom . . . When I at last approached the safe with the key in my hands, it was with some excitement. I slid aside the metal grille . . . one did not get a chance every day to handle medieval books, so I pulled them out one by one and ran through one after another, catching a glimpse of an illumination here, or an interesting-looking text there, but making no systematic observations or notes. Two or three which were not in Latin but were in English caught my eye. One was very fat, some 480 leaves, paper not vellum, the text prose not verse, clearly about King Arthur and his knights, but lacking a beginning or an end . . . I made a vague mental note of this prose Arthurian manuscript, and passed on to the next item . . .¹

MS 13, a volume of nearly 500 folios, turned out to be none other than what is now London, British Library Additional MS 59678, and the basis of the standard edition of Malory's *Morte Darthur*. With London, BL MS Addit. 61823, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, it has been one of the most stunning recent finds among manuscripts of Middle English prose texts. In the field of Middle English verse, new discoveries such as that of the coincidentally-named 'Winchester anthology', now London, BL MS Addit. 60577, which recently emerged from private ownership into the saleroom, keep alive the possibility that there remain hitherto unknown texts to be brought to light: in this case a new Petrarch translation, and a number of new witnesses of late Middle

¹ W. F. Oakeshott, 'The Finding of the Manuscript', in *Essays on Malory*, ed. J. A. W. Bennett (Oxford, 1963), pp. 1-6 (pp. 2-3); see also N. R. Ker, intro., *The Winchester Malory: A Facsimile*, EETS s.s. 4 (1976).

English lyrics.² Secret hopes of an experience like Oakeshott's are no doubt entertained by many of us, and record repositories must seem exactly the place to seek them: holdings here are not often catalogued in ways which give any prominence to non-record material, and plenty of documents remain unscrutinized by those on the lookout for new literary texts, whether prose or verse. What follows here will offer a brief overview of the sort of Middle English verse to be found in record offices, and ask some questions about it.³ Why is it there? How much more of it is there likely to be? and how can we trace it in order to enjoy our own approximations of the warden's bedroom experience?

The discussion will relate mainly to public record offices in Great Britain, both national and local. A considerable amount of what can be said about the holdings of these might equally apply in one way or another to family archives in places like Longleat House or Alnwick Castle; or to the contents of cathedral libraries, school and college libraries, and those of other institutions; even to specialized collections within large national libraries, such as the charters in the British Library. The hunt for copies of Middle English verse texts could of course reasonably take one into all kinds of specialized archives. And since verse was used in the medieval period for many purposes beyond the literary, it can survive in utilitarian or ceremonial contexts (to specify only two possibilities) and so have made its way into collections where one might not think to go looking for it: the Library of the History of Medicine at the Wellcome Institute, for example. The focus in this discussion will be essentially on public record repositories: places where materials have been deposited for matters of record and documentation, and whose holdings have not been shaped by acquisition policies of a carefully defined or culturally specific sort.

Among the most significant Middle English verse items to be found in record offices are the plays from civic cycles which survive in Chester (the Cooper's guild manuscript of the play of the Trial and Flagellation, copied in 1599)⁴ and Coventry. The civic auspices of the plays quite properly dictated these survivals in the context of civic records, although in some comparable instances the materials have passed from local ownership to other locations: the civic 'register' of the Corpus Christi play from York, a large manuscript apparently compiled from the guilds' own prompt copies in the second half

² *The Winchester Anthology: A Facsimile of British Library Additional Manuscript 60577*, intro. E. Wilson, with an account of the music by I. Fenlon (Cambridge, 1981).

³ The concentration on verse follows from recent research destined for a revision of C. Brown and R. H. Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse* (New York, 1943), and its *Supplement*, by R. H. Robbins and J. L. Cutler (Lexington, Kentucky, 1964). Those concerned in the research gratefully acknowledge the financial support offered by the British Academy, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. IMEV and SIMEV numbers will be supplied, where available, with all references to Middle English verse items.

⁴ Now the Company of Coopers Enrolment Book, described in *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. R. M. Lumiansky and D. Mills, EETS s.s. 3 (1974), ix–xxvii.

of the fifteenth century, has ended up in a national institution as London, BL Addit. MS 35290, and the full versions of the Chester cycle of plays (extant in several manuscripts, including late reading copies) have followed a similar path.⁵ In Coventry, tellingly, the survivals have made it into the record office only, as it were, by the skin of their teeth. Fragments of what may have been a working prompt-copy of the Weavers' pageant, in a fifteenth-century hand (now Coventry City Record Office Accession 11/2) 'show signs of having been screwed up at some stage, as if for throwing away'.⁶ Even the fair copy made on vellum in 1534/5 by the one-time master-capper and local impresario Robert Crow (City Record Office Accession 11/1) represents only two playbooks – the Shearmen and Tailors' and the Weavers' pageants, seemingly conceived by Crow as a single composite play.⁷ The Norwich Grocers' play was to prove similarly vulnerable. No medieval or even near-medieval manuscript survived, and the play was edited in 1909 from an eighteenth-century transcript of an 'original', but even this is now unlocatable.⁸ The archivist of the Norfolk and Norwich Record Office reported to Norman Davis in 1962 that 'In the early years of this century this muniment room was quite a rendezvous for Norfolk antiquarians, and no doubt they produced manuscripts to show each other . . . [the transcript] is not among the collection today'.⁹

Civic records preserve verse items of other kinds as well. Still in Coventry, the Corporation Leet Book (BA/E/F/37/1) includes copies of political poems that began life as 'seducious billes' posted in public places in the city. *IMEV* 466, 'Be it knowen & vnderstand/ This Cite shuld be free & nowe is bonde . . .',

⁵ *The York Play: A Facsimile of British Library MS Additional 35290*, intro. R. Beadle and P. Meredith, with a note on the music by R. Rastall, Leeds Texts and Monographs, Medieval Drama Facsimiles VII (Leeds, 1983); the manuscripts of the Chester plays are described, with full bibliography, in *The Chester Mystery Cycle*, ed. Lumiansky and Mills, pp. ix–xxvii.

⁶ P. King, *Coventry Mystery Plays*, Coventry and County Heritage Series 22 (Coventry, 1997), p. 47; see further *Two Coventry Corpus Christi Plays*, ed. H. Craig, 2nd edn, EETS e.s. 87 (London, 1957).

⁷ *The Presentation in the Temple: A Pageant, as Originally Represented by the Corporation of Weavers in Coventry*, ed. T. Sharp, Abbotsford Club (Edinburgh, 1836). Many other related documents were lost in the Birmingham Free Library fire of 1878 and can be reconstructed only from the transcripts made by T. Sharp, *A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry*, republished with a new foreword by A. C. Cawley (Wakefield, 1973).

⁸ *The Non-Cycle Mystery Plays, together with the Croxton Play of the Sacrament and the Pride of Life*, ed. O. Waterhouse, EETS e.s. 104 (London, 1909), pp. 8–18.

⁹ *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, ed. N. Davis, EETS s.s. 1 (Oxford, 1970), p. xxiii. Other dramatic fragments have managed to survive in locations of this sort: *De Clerico et Puella*, for example, reportedly appears on the verso of a roll which is now London, BL MS Addit. 23986, although according to the British Library's account the roll 'has been missing for several years, presumably misplaced'; see *Non-Cycle Plays and the Winchester Dialogues*, intro. N. Davis, Leeds Texts and Monographs, Medieval Drama Facsimiles V (Leeds, 1979), p. 9 and plates.

records a protest made at the removal of one Laurence Saunders from the Common Council (partly for his opposition to civic measures in support of enclosures), and heads the text as follows: 'Mem[orandum]: that within viij dayes after Lammasse ther was a bill sett vppon the north Chirch durre in seynt Mighels Chirch be some evell disposed person vnknownen the tenour wherof here aftur ensueth'.¹⁰ Further verse protests are recorded from the next year, 1496, when Saunders was imprisoned (*IMEV* 3322: 'The cyte is bond that shuld be fre . . .'). Verses which played some part in civic ceremonies are preserved in *The Great Chronicle of London*, now Corporation of London Record Office (Guildhall) MS 3313.¹¹ Among them are the 'sotelties' from the coronation feast of Henry VI, and Lydgate's verses for Henry's 1432 entry into London (*IMEV* 1929, 3799); a celebration of Katherine of Aragon's arrival in London (*SIMEV* 1322.8); and what it terms 'A Scottys Balad', the poem on London elsewhere attributed to Dunbar which begins 'London thou art of townes A per se . . .' (*SIMEV* 1933.5). And quasi-legal texts, held with city records for very practical reasons, sometimes preserve items of verse. Thus the verse couplets found in most copies of Walter of Henley's *Treatise on Husbandry* (*IMEV* 2698, 4113) have made their way, in the context of that work, into the 'Liber Horn' in the Corporation of London Record Office (formerly in the Guildhall Library).¹²

In most of these cases, clearly, the nature of the texts has determined their preservation in the kinds of document likely to be housed in record repositories: they are verses with specific local and/or topical significance, contextualized in longer works of equally specific application such as chronicles. Certain other verse items of less specialized application may still have suggested themselves as appropriate for inclusion with record-type materials: a rhymed version of a charter purporting to be from King Athelston to the abbey of Ripon (*IMEV* 4183) appears on a roll in the Duchy of Lancaster records in the Public Record Office (DL 41/270) as well as in other contexts – 'Wiityn all that is and is gan/ That ich kyng attelstane/ Has gyuen as frelich as ich may/ To kyrk and chaptel of Sent Wylfray . . .'.¹³ It is similarly unsurprising perhaps to find a series of late

¹⁰ *The Coventry Leet Book*, ed. M. D. Harris, EETS o.s. 134, 135, 138, 146 (1907–13), ii, 567, 577–8, and *Historical Poems of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century*, ed. R. H. Robbins (New York, 1959), pp. 63, 279. See also M. D. Harris, 'Laurence Saunders, Citizen of Coventry', *English Historical Review* 9 (1894), 633–51.

¹¹ *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A. H. Thomas and I. D. Thornley (London, 1938).

¹² N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, I (Oxford, 1969), pp. 27–34; see further D. Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley, and other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting* (Oxford, 1971), 114n, 347–8.

¹³ Formerly PRO DL 41/6/1, but seemingly reclassified. It is also copied in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Dodsworth 160 and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O. 3. 2 (1174), part 1 (a seventeenth-century copy). See further J. T. Fowler, *Memorials of the Church of SS Peter and Wilfrid, Ripon, i*, Surtees Society 74 (Durham: 1881), pp. 89–93. Cf. also *IMEV* 3300, a rhyming charter from King Athelston to St John of Beverley,

fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century political prophecies among the state papers from the reign of Henry VIII in the Public Record Office (SP 1/232); among them the so-called 'Chance of the Dice' (IMEV 734.8); a prophecy of Merlin (IMEV 2613.5); and a version of the widely-circulating Scottish prophecy (IMEV 4008). What may be possibly John Skelton's autograph copy of 'A lawde and prayse made for our sovereigne lord the kyng' (IMEV 3456.5), written shortly after the coronation of Henry VIII in 1509, is now a single folded sheet in the PRO records of the Treasury of the Receipt of the Exchequer (E 36/228), reflecting maybe both Skelton's court connections and the likelihood that he received some recompense for his composition.¹⁴

Lydgate's 'Verses on the kings of England' (IMEV 3632) and its relatives occur more than once in this kind of context. Some of the extant copies of the anonymous Kings of England poem related to Lydgate's (IMEV 444 and 3431) are rolls, conceived as record-type documents even if not surviving in record repositories; one copy is found in a fifteenth-century illustrated royal pedigree from William the Conqueror to Henry VI now in the Hertfordshire Record Office (15857A).¹⁵ Cameron Louis has recently edited a specifically Yorkist genealogical chronicle, hitherto unrecorded, inscribed on a roll among some family papers in private ownership in the West Midlands.¹⁶

A copy of Lydgate's text survives in the so-called 'Great Domesday Book' now in the Suffolk Record Office (C4/4), where it is incorporated with a vast quantity of local records copied in 1521 by Richard Percyval, a 'portman' and burgess of Ipswich, whose own gloss to his archival activities is not without interest, since it demonstrates some of the impulses which have secured the preservation of these sorts of text in the context of local archives. Percyval made his compilation, he says (with the help of the common clerk Robert Bray):

For asmyche as yt is behoffull and also/ right necessary for all Baylyffes
and Burgei/ses that now be or here after shalbe wt in this/ town and
Burgh of Ippyswiche in the County/ of Suff. to haue and to know their olde

preserved in a number of MSS and in one of the Cotton charters in the British Library: I. Doyle, Appendix 1 (pp. 20–1) of R. Morris and E. Cambridge, 'Beverley Minster before the Early Thirteenth Century', in *Medieval Art and Architecture in the East Riding of Yorkshire*, ed. C. Wilson, British Archaeological Association, Conference Transactions 9 (1989), pp. 9–32; J. R. Witty, 'The Rhyming Charter of Beverley', *Transactions of the Yorkshire Dialect Society* 4, part 22 (1921), 36–44.

¹⁴ John Skelton: *The Complete English Poems*, ed. J. Scattergood (Harmondsworth, 1983), pp. 110–12 and 419–20. The first page of the document is reproduced in *John Skelton: The Book of the Laurel*, ed. F. W. Brownlow (Cranbury, NJ, 1990), p. 26.

¹⁵ See L. R. Mooney, 'Lydgate's "Kings of England" and Another Verse Chronicle of the Kings', *Viator* 20 (1989), 255–89; other copies on rolls include Oxford, Bodleian Library Ashmole Rolls 21, Douce g.2 and Add. E. 7; New York Public Library, Spencer 193; New Haven, CT, Yale University, MS Osborn A. 14.

¹⁶ C. Louis, 'A Yorkist Genealogical Chronicle in Middle English Verse', *Anglia* 109 (1991), 87–93.

auncyent/ graunttes liberties ordynances lawys and good constitu/cyons
here to fore made and grauntyd vnto them/ for the better mayntenynge and
good gouernynge/ of the same town and burgh. (fol. 6)

A subsidiary reason for his compilation was that the local archive had suffered certain depredations at the hands on 'oon John Blake somtyme Comyn Clerk of this/ town and Burgh before said', who 'embeaselyd stale and bare away a serteyn roll of lawys grauntys/ ordynancys and olde constitucions . . .' (fol. 6). Percyval's labours involved the consultation and copying of material from various sources, 'some parte of them in bookes and some other parte of them in rolles and in scrowys' (fol. 6). His completed large volume was destined to be held in the moot hall or guild hall of Ipswich, for public consultation (and together with it, 'leffte remaynyng in the comyn hutche or/ cheste stondyng in the towne howse other wyse/ called the Guylde halle or Moote halle' (fol. 7), any available originals from which he had worked: part of his labour, incidentally, involved translating texts from French to English). The 'Kings of England' comes in a section of the volume which includes notes on taxes, and on weights and lengths; it has a heading for Edward IV but no stanza for him, as if taken from a copy dating from that king's reign.¹⁷

Rather different from verses such as these, of topical or local reference, are those items whose preservation in record repositories is apparently a matter of uncomplicated serendipity. The famous thirteenth-century bilingual 'Prisoner's Prayer' (IMEV 322) made its way into the 'Liber de Antiquis Legibus' (MS Cust. 1), now in the Corporation of London Record Office (formerly Guildhall Library), on two inserted leaves which may have been fragments from a service book belonging to the manuscript's main scribe.¹⁸ Sometimes poems must simply have strayed into bundles of unrelated documents and remained with them unnoticed. London, Public Record Office SP 1/246 (from the state papers of Henry VIII, again) is a bass's partbook for a set of English songs, copied probably in the 1540s but recording some texts of an earlier date. In the words of John Saltmarsh, who wrote about it in 1935, it could have belonged 'to a clerk who sang bass in a glee-club, and lost his score in an office file'.¹⁹ A few leaves preserving parts of the 'South English Legendary', the property of a reader of what might be assumed rather different tastes, are now among the miscellaneous chancery records in the Public Record Office (C 47/34/1/5).²⁰ Occasionally it is possible to deduce the identity of the owner of

¹⁷ Edited anonymously in 'Rhyming Chronicle of the Kings of England', *The East Anglian* n.s. 1 (1885), pp. 38–41.

¹⁸ *English Lyrics of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. C. Brown (Oxford, 1950), pp. 10–13; *Medieval English Songs*, ed. E. J. Dobson and F. Ll. Harrison (London, 1979), pp. 110–16; N. R. Ker, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, I (London, 1969), pp. 22–7.

¹⁹ 'Two Medieval Love-Songs Set to Music', *Antiquaries' Journal* 15 (1935), 1–21 (p. 18).

²⁰ Containing IMEV 2304, 2872, 2912, 2950, 3813, 4266. Another part of this manuscript, containing IMEV 2868, is now Wisbech Museum MS 21.

such fragments: a parchment leaf used to enclose the 'Rentall of the hospytal/ of Seynt Mary Mawdeleyne wt oute/ the sowth gate of Excetter' (Exeter, Devon Record Office, misc. roll 59) on which is copied part of Lydgate's *Lives of SS Edmund and Fremund* (IMEV 3440), bears the same signature as the compiler of the rental – 'Geffere lewyer wardyn of maudeleyne' – who seems to have completed his records of accounts on 5 October 1527, and presumably owned his Lydgate some time before then.²¹ Other fragmentary record office survivals of bits of texts which are known from elsewhere include part of the 'Alliterative Siege of Jerusalem' (IMEV 1583) on a strip among some loose family papers also in the Devon County Record Office (MS 2507);²² part of 'Richard Coer de Lyon' on a rental roll among the holdings of the Duke of Beaufort (Badminton 704.1.16);²³ a fragment of 'Sidrac and Bocus' (IMEV 2147), seemingly at one time used as a wrapper for manor court rolls, now lodged in Northampton in the Northamptonshire Record Office.²⁴

As one might expect of serendipitous additions, a number of the verse items which have been copied into inviting blank spaces in records and administrative documents are widely-circulating lyrics, songs and carols. Prognostications from St Paul's day (IMEV 1423), a version of the Latin 'clara dies Pauli', appear in the calendar of Fearn (a Premonstratensian house in the county of Ross), a manuscript which made its way into the archives of the Duke of Sutherland, kept formerly at Dunrobin Castle but now deposited in Edinburgh in the National Library of Scotland.²⁵ The moral refrain-poem 'Mercy passeth righteousness' (IMEV 560), evidently available in the fifteenth century to a number of manuscript compilers, appears at the end of some churchwarden's accounts from Cowfold, now at Chichester in the West Sussex Record Office.²⁶ A Latin indenture among the corporation muniments in Bridgwater, Somerset (Corp. mun. 123), dated 1471, and recording dealings concerning a prebendary in the diocese of St Davids, preserves a variant of a nativity carol (IMEV 2377), which in the two other surviving witnesses

²¹ D. E. M. Clarke, 'A New Lydgate Manuscript', *Modern Language Review* 24 (1929), 324–8.

²² See M. Swanton, 'A Further Manuscript of *The Siege of Jerusalem*', *Scriptorium* 44 (1990), 103–4.

²³ See N. Davis, 'Another Fragment of "Richard Coer de Lyon"', *Notes and Queries* 214 (1969), 447–52.

²⁴ The property of Mr Edmund Brudenell of Deene Park, Corby, Northants, and in the keeping of the Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire Archives Committee; the fragment is described in *Sidrak and Bokkus*, ed. T. L. Burton, EETS o.s. 311 (Oxford, 1998), lxxviii–lxxix.

²⁵ See *Second Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1874), Appendix, p. 180 (the parchment flyleaf of the calendar also contains a versified grant of indulgences, IMEV 4115, in a sixteenth-century hand).

²⁶ See the version from London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 853 in *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ, The Parliament of Devils, and Other Religious Poems*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS o.s. 24 (1867), pp. 95–100.

(Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Arch. Selden. B. 26 and London, BL MS Addit. 5665) is accompanied by musical notation.²⁷ Some of these additions made their way into big books, like the Aberdeen Burgh Sasine Register;²⁸ others survive simply on scraps and fragments.

There are also in these contexts, though, a number of unique witnesses and sometimes what might well be authorial drafts or copies of pieces of verse. The other text on the Bridgewater indenture, for example, is a doomsday carol (IMEV 4281) which does not survive elsewhere.²⁹ Some of these pieces are simply short snippets, like an otherwise unattested four-line prayer to the Virgin (IMEV 2160) scribbled on the back of a late fourteenth-century Latin grant of lands now in the Shrewsbury Record Office (3232/3).³⁰ Others are more substantial, like the political verses against the ministers of Richard II (IMEV 3529, 'There is a busch that is forgrowe . . .') now in the Staffordshire Record Office (Bagot D1721/3/186),³¹ or the poem on the Nine Worthies recently identified by Thorlac Turville-Petre on a massive genealogical roll in the Lincolnshire Archives Office (MS 2 Tennyson D'Eyncourt K/1).³² The consonance of subject matter in this last instance is striking: not often do such additions complement or extend the texts which they accompany.

Just occasionally, added texts such as these contain informative detail about their scribes or about the contexts and circumstances in which they were copied. A political carol copied onto the verso of part of a late fifteenth-century rental for the district of Ashford in Kent,³³ in some heavily marked version of Kentish dialect, seems, according to R. L. Greene's generally plausible reading, to refer symbolically to local feeling concerning Sir John Fogge, a parishioner of Ashford and a notable patron of good causes in the town, whose lands and honours were briefly bestowed by Richard III on William Malyverer; Fogge is represented in the carol as a briar and Malyverer as a periwinkle ('The brere het ybrowt de wed adown/ An layd hys leyghuys loywe').³⁴ Although the identities of the author and scribe are not made clear,

²⁷ *The Early English Carols*, ed. R. L. Greene, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1977), pp. 7 and 330.

²⁸ P. Bawcutt, 'The Earliest Texts of Dunbar', in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays celebrating the publication of 'A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English'*, ed. Felicity Riddy (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 183–98 (p. 186).

²⁹ *Carols*, ed. Greene, p. 216.

³⁰ The document was formerly in the Free Library, Whitchurch; see C. Brett, 'Two Newly Found Middle English Texts', *Modern Language Review* 22 (1927), 73–5 (the other text is a letter alluding to Sir Gilbert Talbot).

³¹ W. Hamper, 'Sarcastic Verses, Written by an Adherent to the House of Lancaster, in the Last year of the Reign of Richard the Second, A. D. 1399', *Archaeologia* 21 (1827), 89–91.

³² T. F. S. Turville-Petre, 'A Poem on the Nine Worthies', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 27 (1983), 79–84.

³³ Kent Record Office, K. A. O. U. 182 Z1, described by M. B. Parkes in Felix Hull, *Guide to the Kent County Archives Office* (Maidstone, 1958), p. 230; *Carols*, ed. Greene, p. 257.

³⁴ *Carols*, ed. Greene, pp. 471–3.

it seems reasonable to assume that both (they could have been one and the same, of course) were inhabitants of Ashford in the 1480s. Ruth Kennedy's recent investigation of the lines of alliterative verse christened 'A Bird in Bishopswood' contrives similarly to localize this verse item, inscribed on the blank part of a parchment roll otherwise filled with the accounts of John Tickhill, collector of rents of the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's, for 1395–6; her assessment of the manuscript evidence leads her to conclude that the verse on the roll is a draft, 'possibly a holograph'.³⁵

The texts considered thus far have come to light by a variety of means and demonstrate something of the range of Middle English verse material preserved outside major collections of literary manuscripts. Are they of any relevance to the new directions in manuscript studies which are the theme of this conference? Their preservation in such a range of contexts and locations serves, if nothing else, to make clear that new finds remain to be made, and that they are perhaps these days most likely to take place in local repositories and specialized sorts of archive. Sometimes they come to light through the energies of scholars in disciplines other than Middle English, as Christine Carpenter has recently stumbled on a significant amount of verse, in the form of a sequence of love-poems, in the course of her researches into Warwickshire family records.³⁶ Other discoveries are made during large-scale documentary trawls, such as those made by the teams of researchers for the Records of Early English Drama (REED): Diana Wyatt published in the course of work of this sort a small clutch of verse items added to documents in the Humberside Record Office at Beverley.³⁷

It is inevitably difficult to know where to look for Middle English verse in contexts such as these until it simply turns up. The manner in which records have been catalogued may well not mention material which seems irrelevant to a document's primary purpose, or see fit to record with any precision things like marginal additions or space-fillers. Those collaborating on the revision of *The Index of Middle English Verse* have grown used to people struggling to recall material which they have seen somewhere and disregarded as unrelated to their own researches, yet which they feel in retrospect they ought to draw to someone's attention. It is hard to conceive of any practicable way of sharing information on matters of this kind beyond the

³⁵ Corporation of London Record Office MS 25125/32; R. Kennedy, "'A Bird in Bishopswood': Some Newly-Discovered Lines of Alliterative Verse from the Late Fourteenth Century", in *Medieval Literature and Antiquities: Studies in Honour of Basil Cottle*, ed. M. Stokes and T. L. Burton (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 71–87.

³⁶ *The Armburgh Papers*, intro. C. Carpenter (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 155–68; much of the material is unrecorded elsewhere, but the sequence includes parts of IMEV 3362 and IMEV 724.

³⁷ D. Wyatt, 'Two Yorkshire Fragments: Perhaps Dramatic', *REED Newsletter* (1978), 17–21.

vaguely defined possibilities that exist already – leaving a note with the staff in a library or record office – but we might bear in mind as one new direction in manuscript studies the new technologies for electronic sharing of information which can facilitate the exchange of ideas and new discoveries.

The transmission of correct information about this kind of material is also notoriously difficult. Record offices change name, as for instance with county reorganization; they are sometimes relocated in new buildings, with the result that their collections get split up; and their records are sometimes reclassified with new shelfmarks. Disasters like the recent fire at Norwich recall the losses occasioned by earlier incidents such as that at Coventry in the nineteenth century. The dramatic fragment *Pride of Life* went the way of the burnt Coventry material. It was part of a collection of deeds and other documents from Christ Church, Dublin, deposited after the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869 in the Public Record Office in the Four Courts Building. But in 1922 all the records were lost in an explosion and fire.³⁸ Publications like *The Index of Middle English Verse* and its *Supplement* were not always able to keep up with the changes brought about over time, even on those occasions when they had listed the information correctly in the first place. Richard Hamer's recent *Manuscript Index to the 'Index of Middle English Verse'*, though it cleared up a number of these bits of misinformation, was not able to resolve them all, and (to use just one location as an example) his entry for the items of Middle English verse in the Public Record Office in London – itself of course recently relocated – draws attention to a number of perplexities and preserves a few more.³⁹ Two sources were given incorrect shelfmarks in the *Index* and *Supplement*;⁴⁰ another turns out not to contain what is claimed to be in it;⁴¹ three more have incomplete shelfmarks and are noted as 'unlocated'.⁴² Only gradually, with help from archivists and with collation of the information with that in other reference tools, can confusions of this kind be cleared up.

In relation to future directions in manuscript studies, the point of most significance to be learned from this material remains the most obvious one: that the surveying of manuscript archives, like the scrutiny of individual manuscripts, is most fruitfully undertaken with an open mind. Sources of all

³⁸ *Non-Cycle Plays*, ed. Davis, pp. lxxxv–vi; and *Non-Cycle Plays and the Winchester Fragments*, in which an illustration from an edition of 1891 is reproduced in facsimile, p. 21.

³⁹ R. Hamer, *A Manuscript Index to the 'Index of Middle English Verse'* (London, 1995).

⁴⁰ Hamer corrects the location for IMEV 4183/3 from DL A.23 to DL 41/6/1 (the correct shelfmark is now DL 41/270); and that for SIMEV 2293.5 from 163/22/1/1 to E 163/22/1.

⁴¹ SIMEV 1936.5 does not appear to be in PRO C 47/39/15.

⁴² The *Supplement* location for SIMEV 3456.5, 'Treasury Receipt of Exchequer B 2 8' is noted by Hamer as unlocated; the correction location is E36/228, fols. 7–8. IMEV 4008/A8 and 4056.5/1, located by the *Index* and *Supplement* in 'State papers Henry VIII', and noted again by Hamer as unlocated, appear in SP 1/232, fol. 219.

kinds can illuminate literary scholarship, often in unexpected ways, and by reverse operation, of course, literary scholarship can offer help those who labour in other disciplines. The collection of Cely papers in the Public Record Office, for example, contains not just the one item of doggerel verse listed in the *Supplement* (IMEV 3768.2: advising sober living), but also, in the payments made by George Cely to a music teacher and noted in a list of accounts, references to a number of songs surviving in full in other witnesses: invaluable testimony that these must have been texts in relatively wide circulation.⁴³ Extensive recent researches into the contents and compilation of London, British Library MS Harley 2253 have similarly revealed not just scribal correspondences between the manuscript and other kinds of documents, but also new texts, such as the love lyric with an O-and-I refrain, preserved locally on a fourteenth-century rental roll, which permits fuller contextualization of the Harley lyrics.⁴⁴ Just as would-be authors and copyists in search of spare parchment or paper can hardly have been expected to confine their literary experiments to the flyleaves and margins of literary manuscripts, so professional and semi-professional scribes rarely made their living solely through the copying of 'literary' materials: their hands can often be identified in different contexts, as individual studies have made clear. Much besides fiction, to adapt Natalie Davis's phrase,⁴⁵ resides in the archives.

⁴³ A. Hanham, *The Celys and their World: An English Merchant Family of the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 33–4.

⁴⁴ D. C. Cox and C. Revard, 'A New ME O-and-I Lyric and its Provenance', *Medium Aevum* 54 (1985), 33–46.

⁴⁵ N. Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1987).

Medieval Manuscripts and Electronic Media: Observations on Future Possibilities

MARTHA W. DRIVER

The application of electronic media to the study of medieval manuscripts is a concept only recently considered by scholars and teachers of the Middle Ages.¹ The implications for the shape of future scholarship are both enticing and hair-raising: the visionary proclaiming that the Internet will universalize access for anyone wishing to study or view the illuminated page, the Luddite gloomily mentioning the transitory nature of the Internet and commenting on the potential loss of access to actual material by serious scholars in the rush to reproduce manuscripts for all and sundry. This essay, meant to comfort the fearful and to engage technologic neophytes in the stunning possibilities afforded by electronic resources, includes a brief, and perhaps temporal, survey of manuscript sites available on the World Wide Web. In order to point to some benefits (and pitfalls) of Internet research, I then will examine more closely recent publicity about the *Canterbury Tales* Project, and finally, share some observations drawn from a multimedia class on medieval and Renaissance literature that I have been teaching for six consecutive semesters with Jeanine Meyer, a colleague in Information Systems, at Pace University in New York City. While I do not think electronic media can replace the process of going to libraries and looking at primary sources, of having the direct experience of observing illumination or transcribing a text, or of holding a medieval manuscript in one's hands, the promotional, publicizing and creative possibilities of the Internet or its related form, the CD-ROM, are

¹ For an excellent overview, see C. J. Brown and B. Valentine, 'Networking in Medieval and Postmodern Cultures: Texts, Authorship, and Intellectual Property', *Journal of the Early Book Society* 2 (1999), 157-78, edited by Martha W. Driver. A special issue of *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 14.2 (1999), entitled 'Teaching the Middle Ages with Technology', edited by M. W. Driver and D. McGrady, includes nine essays that report on the successful teaching of medieval texts, mainly to undergraduate students, using a variety of electronic media. The work of Larry Benson and a number of Harvard graduate students attests to the fine quality of medieval materials that can be found on the Internet. They are consistently cited by students in college classrooms as the best sites to support the study of Chaucer and the Middle Ages. The Harvard Chaucer site, last consulted September 1999, may be accessed at <www.courses.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer>. All sites discussed in this essay were accessed again in September 1999 unless otherwise noted.

not to be underestimated. Here I shall explore briefly the public and popular nature of the Internet, and its most powerful application, the Net as teaching tool.

We all know something about the Internet, about its ready accessibility, its unprocessed content that needs careful vetting by the viewer and its essentially egalitarian presentation. Anyone with a working knowledge of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) and the right equipment can publish on the Internet. For the study of manuscripts, the mix of technology with old-fashioned scholarship, science with literary and historical analysis of primary sources, is a brave new world, built on one wonderful premise: knowledge of a subject once restricted to a privileged few may now be readily shared by amateurs, students and scholars around the globe. Writing about the Humanities Media Interface Project, Yasuhiko Torii, the President of Keio University, says that 'The HUMI Project aims to digitize manuscripts and rare books, process them, research them and provide on-line access to multimedia representations and project results via high-speed networks and the Internet. The global academic community will thus be able to use this material for education and research'.² Toshi Takamiya, leader of the HUMI project to digitize rare books and manuscripts, has further commented that 'virtual reality allows us to encounter texts in an immediate way'.³ It is this availability and immediacy of materials in electronic format that is the key to revitalizing work on medieval texts as well as the field of medieval studies more generally.

Most manuscript sites on the Web are quite beautiful, the reproductions worthy of the originals. But the latest technology does not, as yet, always work dependably. A virus can quickly bring the system down; Web access can be unreliable. Another issue, recognized by the revised Modern Language Association stylesheet for notating source citations on the Web, is that sites are often transitory. Because sites are available one day and not the next, the MLA suggests that documentation of sources from the World Wide Web include the 'Date when the researcher accessed the source'.⁴

Among examples of manuscript materials on the Internet are pages from

² *Treasures of The Keio University Library: In Search of Gutenberg in the Digital Universe* (Tokyo, 1996), p. ix.

³ Toshiyuki Takamiya, 'Medieval Materials at Keio University Library and the HUMI (Humanities Media Interface) Project, with Particular Reference to the Digitized Hopton Hall MS', the plenary lecture presented at Sources, Exemplars, and Copy-Texts: Influence and Transmission, 1350-1550, a conference sponsored by the Early Book Society at the University of Wales, Lampeter (9-13 July 1997).

⁴ MLA Guidelines for Internet citations are available at Documenting Sources from the World Wide Web. September 1999 <www.mla.org/main_stl.htm#sources>. Further suggestions for such citations include 'Date of electronic publication, of the latest update, or of posting', 'Name of any institution or organization sponsoring or associated with the Web site', 'Electronic address, or URL, of the source (in angle brackets)' (2).

the *Beowulf* manuscript, part of a collaborative project called the Electronic *Beowulf* between the British Library and the University of Kentucky. The first successful transmission of the *Beowulf* manuscript from the British Library to the University of Kentucky occurred over the phonelines, an almost unimaginable feat given the tendency for lines to cross, static on the line, and other hazards of international telephonic travel. Kevin S. Kiernan describes recovery of portions of the *Beowulf* text using ultraviolet light, then sending the text 'from the British Library to the University of Kentucky. These few words cost \$55 in a phone bill, but at least they arrived intact, unlike the hand-carried images at Gatwick'. Facsimile pages of the *Beowulf* manuscript may be found on several Internet sites to be studied and discussed by students, professors and scholars.⁵

The British Library site also includes selected images from other manuscripts in its collections. For example, in its exhibitions section, 'Mythical Quest', the viewer 'will find stories depicted in works that reflect the fascination over four thousand years with the search for true love, everlasting glory and spiritual enlightenment'. Subjects include the Quest for the Holy Grail and the Legendary Journeys of Alexander the Great, illustrated by scenes from medieval manuscripts, drawn from the more than '200 visually attractive manuscripts' originally exhibited. The online exhibition is introduced by an illumination of Alexander being lowered from a ship in a glass barrel to view the wonders of the sea, from The Old French Prose Alexander Romance manuscript, copied in Rouen in 1445. Another related website, sponsored by the British Library Education Service, includes reproductions from the Magna Carta.⁶

Like the British Library, the Bodleian Library is also engaged in digitizing and presenting selected manuscript materials on the Internet. The Bodleian

⁵ K. S. Kiernan, 'The Electronic *Beowulf*: Digital Preservation, Restoration, and Dissemination of Medieval Manuscripts', in *Scholarly Publishing on the Electronic Networks: Proceedings of the Third Symposium*, ed. A. Okerson, ARL Publications 1994 October 1997 <www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/English/Beowulf>. See also <www.uky.edu/~kiernan/eBeowulf/guide.htm> and <www.bl.uk/diglib/beowulf/> (consulted September 1999).

⁶ Themes for the 'Mythical Quest' exhibition included: Jason and the Quest for the Golden Fleece, the Seven Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor, the Tale of Cupid and Psyche, Rama's Quest for Sita, and Journey to the West. Other online exhibitions sponsored by the British Library that may be pertinent are Earth & Heavens and *Hortus Eystettensis* (The British Library Board. Copyright 1977 <www.bl.uk/exhibitions>). Some reproductions may be accessed directly by consulting <www.bl.uk/exhibitions/images>. The British Library educational site, consulted in September 1999, describes the history of writing, among other subjects, and of the development of paper, along with a British Library exhibition in which viewers can turn pages of famous medieval manuscripts <www.education.bl.uk/new/index.html>. See also the British Library's digital library at <www.bl.uk/diglib>. For more on the history of paper, one may wish to consult the American Museum of Papermaking at the Institute of Paper Science and Technology <www.ipst.edu/amp/index.html>.

homepage refers the researcher to a new image catalogue of 'thumb-nails' taken from its prodigious slide collection of manuscripts. So far, twenty-six images have been posted from the approximately 30,000 slides in the Bodleian Library's collections. The Bodleian site, however, warns its users: 'Please note that copyright remains with the Bodleian Library!'⁷

The 'enluminures' site of the Bibliothèque nationale de France offers a short but select list of images from several manuscripts, among them leaves from four fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Chronicles of Froissart* (BNF, fr 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646), illustrated pages from the fourteenth-century *Grandes Chroniques de France* (BNF, fr 2813), folios from two fifteenth-century manuscripts of Bartolomeus Anglicus (BNF, fr 135, 136), every illuminated page from the fourteenth-century *Petites Heures* (Little Hours) of Jean de Berry (BNF, Lat 18014), and illustrations from a fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Livre de la Chasse* by Gaston Phébus (BNF, fr 616). Both thumbnails and full-page images are available for study or reproduction in a variety of scholarly and educational contexts.⁸

Many sites with reproductions of and commentary on medieval manuscripts are available on the Internet, and the best way to access them is through an automated search engine that will scan every relevant page it can find. For example, the Alta Vista search engine finds 2316 different Web pages when the topic 'medieval manuscripts' is queried. Topics the inquirer can investigate include: the Rossell Hope Robbins Library, the Hill Monastic Library, the *Decameron* Web, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. Yahoo! finds 36 site matches: one can access booksellers' catalogues ('Bruce Ferrini Illuminated Manuscripts and Cuneiform Tablets', 'Foliophiles Collection'), exhibition catalogues at a variety of museums and colleges (for example, 'an in-depth history of manuscripts, in conjunction with a exhibit [*sic*] at Sweet Briar College's Pannell Gallery' or 'Frick Fine Arts Library Book of Hours') and information pertaining

⁷ The Bodleian Library, 'Towards an Image Catalogue . . .', April 1994 <www.rsl.ox.ac.uk/imacat.html>. Issues of fair use and copyright have recently been discussed by the College Art Association, which has stated that 'fair use, at a minimum, should be available to protect the use of images in educational settings'. (R. A. Baron, K. R. Cohen, and J. P. Cunard, 'Promotion of Distance Education Through Digital Technologies', Comments of the College Art Association, Docket No. 98-12A: Library of Congress Copyright Office. Reproduced in *CAA News*, May 1999, n.p.). See also 'Copyright and Fair Use in the Digital Age: Q & A with Peter Lyman', *Educom Review* 29 nos. 1-2 (1995), 34.

⁸ Manuscripts from the Bibliothèque nationale de France, from an online exhibition 'Le roi Charles V et son temps (1338-1380)' (11/03/1996), may be accessed at <www.bnf.fr/enluminures/manuscripts/manuscrit.htm> (September 1999). A complete list of medieval manuscript reproductions online follows: Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, XVe s. (BNF, fr 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646); *Grandes Chroniques de France*, XIVe s. (BNF, fr 2813); Atlas catalan, XIVe s. (BNF, Esp 30); Barthélemy l'Anglais, *Livre des Propriétés des Choses*, XVe s. (BNF, fr 135, 136); *Petites Heures* de Jean de Berry, XIVe s. (BNF, Lat 18014); Gaston Phébus, *Livre de la Chasse*, XVe s. (BNF, fr 616); *Bréviaire* de Martin d'Aragon, XVe s. (BNF, ROTH 2529).

to medieval music manuscripts, Scandinavian manuscripts and facsimiles. More general medieval topics are discussed in an almost overwhelmingly large number of sites. One query of the Yahoo! search engine for the word 'medieval' brought up 22 categories and 713 websites.⁹

The problem for the more advanced scholar is that these are mainly selected pages to tantalize the viewer rather than entire texts to be studied – a publisher's or library's teasers to get the consumer to buy the forthcoming CD-ROM. For the general public, or even the introductory class in medieval literature, this kind of access is probably enough. There are among us, however, visionary librarians and scholars, who foresee a time when every page of every manuscript will be available either free on the Internet or more likely for a substantial price on CD-ROM, one of the visions that helped to remove Father Leonard Boyle from his post as prefect of the Vatican Library when he sold reproduction rights for the collection to a little-known California businesswoman, Elaine Peconi, later bringing on a number of lawsuits. On the other hand, though the Vatican has tried to paint Boyle as 'a rogue priest, so that the Holy See can disown the contracts he signed' with Peconi, Boyle was also able to accomplish a great deal during his tenure in the library, computerizing 'the listings for a million and a half printed books' and authorizing installation of a 'powerful search engine that is a genuine research tool'. Over the past two years, IBM has digitized 20,000 images from 150 of the library's 150,000 manuscripts. In his initial negotiations with IBM, Boyle was asked by their representative what financial backing he could contribute to the pilot project. To this, Boyle replied, 'I'm not putting up anything. I've got a hundred and fifty thousand manuscripts. That's bigger than IBM any day'. Though Boyle was ousted, the IBM project to digitize every page of every Vatican manuscript proceeds.¹⁰

Dialing into the Holy See (at www.vatican.va), one can find information on the Vatican Museums and a description of the Vatican archive, along with online catalogues. Through the search engine Yahoo!, images from the exhibit 'Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture' can further be found, which include reproductions from the fifteenth-century Urbino Bible

⁹ M. W. Hennequin and N. Knowles, "'I'll Drown My Book': Mixing Medieval Texts and Modern Technology", *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 14 (1999), p. 195. Among the best university sites to cull for manuscript reproductions are those produced by the Columbia University Library <www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/indiv/rare/images/> and Brigham Young University Library <library.byu.edu/~rdh/euro-docs/medren.html>. One resource formerly available at the site maintained by Florida State University (<garnet.acns.fsu.edu/~dhr7762/>), described as 'A compendium of information on ancient and medieval manuscripts and the history of books', is now defunct. The description is taken from the short-lived magazine *Biblio* (October 1998), 71, dedicated to 'Exploring the World of Books', and now itself no longer in print.

¹⁰ Alexander Stille, 'Letter from Vatican City: Library Privileges', *The New Yorker* (28 September 1998), 43–59.

(1476–78), a fifteenth-century manuscript copy of the *Iliad* in Latin and Greek, a page from Petrarch's *Bucolicum carmen* with annotations in his own hand, and a letter from Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn. And, if after consulting these sites, one has further religious or reference questions, the entire *Catholic Encyclopedia* is available for consultation online.¹¹

In some cases, the electronic copy is, or is said to be, an improvement over the original. Writing about the Electronic *Beowulf*, Kevin S. Kiernan discusses the recovery of portions of text lost in the Cotton library fire of 1731. The brittle edges of the manuscript subsequently 'crumbled away', with a loss of some 2,000 letters, and the edges were then covered with paper to avoid further damage to the manuscript. As 'part of the British Library's "Initiatives for Access" program to make its collections more available to the public through new technologies', the *Beowulf* manuscript was first digitized. Using fiber-optic backlighting 'hundreds of unrecorded letters and parts of letters along the covered edges, . . . were for the first time made visible'. The two eighteenth-century transcripts of *Beowulf* made 'after the fire, but before the brittle edges of the manuscript had fallen away' by G. J. Thorkelin, the first modern editor and translator of the poem, and by his 'hired scribe' have also been digitized. These transcriptions, along with the extant manuscript and the earliest collations made by J. J. Coneybeare and Sir Frederick Madden are now all part of the Electronic *Beowulf* project, described in the British Library's promotional materials as 'an encyclopedic resource, founded on the only extant manuscript of *Beowulf* for all . . . diverse interests'. Students again may learn about the history of the text on the Internet (a history available to any scholar who knows the way around a library), the many related resources right at their fingertips.¹²

Similar recovery of text has been discussed by Pamela King in the process of creating an electronic facsimile of the manuscript of Robert Croo's play for

¹¹ The Holy See, October 1998 <www.vatican.va>. A recent novel, *The Seville Communion*, by Arturo Perez-Reverte (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1999), describes the activities of a hacker named 'Vespers' who breaks into the Pope's personal e-mail account with reports of crimes committed in a church in Seville. The novel may be ordered online from Amazon.com, and the prospective buyer may also read several reviews before purchasing, including forty-seven 'customer comments' sent by e-mail from readers around the world. The Library of Congress Vatican Exhibit, 'Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture', 2 November 1994 <metalab.unc.edu/expo/vatican.exhibit>. On the first page of the site is the caution: 'The text and images in the Online Exhibit Rome Reborn: The Vatican Library and Renaissance Culture are for the personal use of students, scholars, and the public. Any commercial use or publication of them is strictly prohibited.' *The Catholic Encyclopedia* is found at <www.knight.org/advent/cathen>.

¹² K. S. Kiernan, 'Digital Image Processing and the *Beowulf* Manuscript', *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 6 (1991): *Special Issue on Computers and Medieval Studies*, ed. M. Deegan with A. Armour and M. Infusino, 20–27 September 1999 <www.uky.edu/%7Ekiernan/eBeowulf/main.htm>. General information and publicity for the British Library may be found at <www.bl.uk>.

the Coventry Weavers, part of a larger project to produce 'The Coventry Mystery Plays in Electronic Facsimile'. Using Adobe Photoshop to enhance photographs of the surviving manuscripts, she was able to bring up stage directions that had not been noticed before, along with the initials 'RP' written on an appended woodcut that seem to refer to Richard Pyxley, 'who belonged to a dynasty of Coventry weavers and wrote his name elsewhere in the manuscript's margins'.¹³ Both projects – the Electronic *Beowulf* and the Coventry Mystery Plays – demonstrate impressively some of the legitimate uses of technology. Both are also comprehensive and scholarly, each focusing the viewer's attention on a specific manuscript and bringing together a number of related texts, using historical research and detective work to supplement technology.

Perhaps the most ambitious and comprehensive manuscript project of all is that planned for the *Canterbury Tales* by Norman Blake, Peter Robinson and a number of other scholars. The stated goal of the Project is to make available all manuscript and early printed witnesses of the *Canterbury Tales* on CD-ROM, presenting images of every pre-1500 text and including transcriptions, collations and descriptions of each manuscript and imprint. The *Canterbury Tales* Project, when complete, will thus give scholars and teachers of Chaucer immediate access via the computer screen to all early Chaucer manuscripts and early printed editions, which currently reside in libraries and private collections all over the world. In effect, the whole textual history of the *Canterbury Tales* will be as close as one's computer screen.¹⁴

The CD-ROM of 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', the first publication in the *Canterbury Tales* Project series, can be specifically tailored to an individual class. Using bookmarks and hypertext links, a professor of medieval literature or teacher of a more general survey class can discuss specific manuscripts, show the pages, relate these to the Caxton editions and then refer students to Chaucer sites on the Web. While this is a superficial use of a very complex scholarly project, it does give undergraduate students a sense of what various manuscripts look like, an idea about changes in text and language from witness to witness and a notion of the complexities of scholarly editing. While the series is also of interest to teachers of the history of the book and of bibliography, its main audience is scholarly. Much new research has already come out of the *Canterbury Tales* Project, particularly about erasures in the margins of the Hengwrt manuscript, for example.

¹³ P. M. King, 'The Coventry Mystery Plays in Electronic Facsimile', paper presented at Sources, Exemplars and Copy-Texts: Influence and Transmission, 1350–1550, a conference sponsored by the Early Book Society, University of Wales, Lampeter, 9–13 July 1997. See also King, 'The Pastedowns in Coventry Record Office Accession 11/2, The Coventry Weavers' Pageant', *Journal of the Early Book Society* 1 (1997), 141–3.

¹⁴ For further information, see the *Canterbury Tales* Project, directed by N. F. Blake and P. Robinson <www.shef.ac.uk/uni/projects/ctp/index.html>. See also 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue' on CD-ROM, ed. P. Robinson (Cambridge, 1996).

The *Canterbury Tales* Project has made another, perhaps unplanned contribution to the field of manuscript study, and that is in creating public awareness. Publicity for medievalists, when it concerns their recent discoveries, is never a bad thing, engaging the attention of non-medievalists, giving them subjects to discuss with their medievalist friends, and bringing more students into the classroom. An article featuring Norman Blake and Peter Robinson, directors of The *Canterbury Tales* Project, appeared in the 27 August 1998 issue of *Nature* magazine. Among other titles from the issue, like 'DNA methylation models histone acetylation', 'Spatial exploration induces a persistent reversal of long-term potentiation in rat hippocampus', and 'Controlling local disorder in self-assembled monolayers by patterning the topography of their metallic supports', we find 'The phylogeny of *The Canterbury Tales*', co-authored by two Cambridge University biochemists, Adrian C. Barbrook and Christopher J. Howe, along with Robinson and Blake.¹⁵

'Phylogeny' refers to the study of the evolutionary development of any species of plant or animal. In this case, scientists analysed the fifty-eight surviving manuscripts of 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue', using computers normally employed to study the evolutionary relationships between animal species. The scientific analysis showed that 'Several manuscripts form groups, each descended from a single and distinct common ancestor'. And as Chaucer scholars would expect, the scientists further found 'that the ancestor of the whole tradition, Chaucer's own copy, was not a finished or fair copy, but a working draft containing (for example) Chaucer's own notes of passages to be deleted or added, and alternate drafts of sections'.

According to a later ABC News interview with Adrian Barbrook, one of the *Nature* co-authors, the *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts have a convoluted genealogy, mutating into several different versions: '[There are] quite close parallels in which way the manuscripts and DNA evolve. There is a mutation process when the manuscript is copied just as you get with DNA'.¹⁶ While feeding manuscript data into computer programs designed to discover genetic relationships might be a dubious proposition (manuscripts are not fruit flies) and there is no mention in the *Nature* article of a control group of randomly selected texts fed into the same program to see if the program will, in fact, find relationships in any group of data, the article itself seems to promise the possibility of a useful shortcut to developing stemmata.

More importantly, this rather modest one-page article in a highly-respected specialist science journal generated a blizzard of publicity about the *Canterbury Tales*. In *The Times*, Chaucer was described as 'an untidy writer

¹⁵ A. C. Barbrook, C. J. Howe, N. Blake, P. Robinson, 'The Phylogeny of *The Canterbury Tales*', *Nature* 394 (27 August 1998), 839. The table of contents from which titles were taken occurs on v–vii.

¹⁶ K. Chang (quoting A. Barbrook), 'The Scientists' Tale: Tracing the Ancestry of *The Canterbury Tales*', ABCNEWS.com. 1998 <www.abcnews.com/sections/science/DailyNews/canterbury980831.html>.

who left the *Canterbury Tales* in a state of confusion', an observation scientifically confirmed through computer-based analysis.¹⁷ Still other newspapers featured discussion of the 16-line passage from the Wife's Prologue in which she talks about satisfying her sexual appetites with any man who comes along, a passage not actually addressed in the *Nature* article, but said by the authors, according to later published accounts of the *Nature* article, to have been an early draft of the Wife's description that Chaucer ultimately intended to omit. In an article from *The Independent* by science editor Steve Connor, entitled 'Wife of Bath's Hectic Sex Life Should Have Been Cut', traditional scholars are said to have blackened the Wife's fame, calling her 'a monster of carnality', while the Cambridge biochemists, the good-guy scientists, have discovered through technology that Chaucer actually 'had a change of heart over his original description of her character' and have thus cleared the Wife's undeserved bad name.¹⁸

The *Electronic Telegraph*, in an article entitled 'Wife of Bath not as bad as all that, says computer', takes this argument a bit further, asserting that 'One of literature's greatest characters, Chaucer's lascivious Wife of Bath, was really a woman struggling to keep her appetites within the confines of Christian marriage'. And the BBC News Website introduced the story with the headline 'Computer judges Wife of Bath to be Chaste'. According to this version, 'The infamous passage about her appetite for all men "were he short or long or black or white", no matter "how poore" or of "what degree", was probably excised by Chaucer and replaced by scholars later, . . . scientists have discovered'.¹⁹

The publicity about the *Nature* article demonstrates the permutations one story may take. Here we find, as in a medieval chronicle, manipulation of the facts in the transmission of the text, along with the attendant scribal misreadings or misinterpretations. Despite inaccuracies of reportage, however, people are suddenly reading about *The Canterbury Tales* and thinking about transmission of the manuscript text in a way they have not before, a narrative made more compelling to the technologically-minded public because of the connection between literature and science, specifically old literature and computer science. Scientists (and science writers), respected in contemporary culture, give credibility to scholarly pursuits, to the study of manuscripts, for example.

¹⁷ N. Hawkes, Science Editor, 'Computer Tale gets Closer to Chaucer', *The Times* (27 August 1998). Online <www.the-times.co.uk/cgi-bin/BackMIssue?>.

¹⁸ S. Connor, 'Wife of Bath's Hectic Sex Life Should Have Been Cut', *The Independent* (27 August 1998). Received as e-mail from I. Levine, Brooklyn College, 28 August 1998.

¹⁹ A. Irwin, Science Correspondent, 'Wife of Bath not as bad as all that, says computer', *Electronic Telegraph* (27 August 1998) <www.telegraph.co.uk>. This site was inaccessible in September 1999. 'Computer judges Wife of Bath to be chaste' (27 August 1998) <news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/sci/tech/newsid_159000>. Links to both sites may be found through the *Canterbury Tales* Project homepage.

While technology is a seductive tool, the science providing ready access to a host of resources, students are the real future of medieval manuscript studies, and students use the Internet. One site popular with students is Women Writers of the Middle Ages, written by students at Millersville University and illustrated with pages from pertinent manuscripts, one indication of who is most actively using this material.²⁰ And, there are growing numbers of courses in which students are introduced to medieval manuscript study by using primary sources reproduced online. For example, graduate students, taking a bi-coastal manuscripts course sponsored by the University of California, Berkeley, and Columbia University, used an image bank called the Digital Scriptorium, in which thousands of manuscript leaves in several libraries, along with codices and documents, dating from the eighth to sixteenth centuries, were scanned and made available on the Internet.²¹ Teaching in 'an underfunded 1960s-founded British university with no medieval manuscripts of its own', Meg Twycross has described her development of computer courseware using medieval manuscripts, teaching students to observe materials otherwise not readily accessible to them.²²

The availability of manuscript materials on the Internet extends the range of research for the undergraduate student in a way unthinkable ten or twenty years ago; students can now grasp the whole history of the *Beowulf* manuscript in a few hours, for example, thanks to the synthesis of materials found on the sites produced by the British Library and Kevin Kiernan. Through the Internet, with its luminous reproductions of pages from medieval manuscripts, students begin to incorporate the history of the text, or manuscript, with reading the text itself. One finds this again and again in the examples of student work posted on the Grendel site, which has been produced in connection with a literature survey course that I have team-taught for three years with my colleague Jeanine Meyer at Pace University. In the class, students create a number of projects in multimedia formats as well as mastering the production of Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) docu-

²⁰ Posted by Millersville University, Millersville, Pennsylvania <www.millersv.edu/~english/homepage/duncan/medfem/contra.html>. Among other popular media inspirational to students is film. Recently, I was urged by students in the *Beowulf* class to see *The Thirteenth Warrior*, a film based on a fictionalized version of the eyewitness descriptions of the *Rus* by the historical figure Ibn Fadlān. The film draws more directly on the novelized account by Michael Crichton (New York, 1976), entitled *Eaters of the Dead*, in which Crichton combines the observations of Fadlān with a retelling of the *Beowulf* story. In a postscript to the novel (1992) Crichton remarks, 'When *Eaters of the Dead* was first published, this playful version of *Beowulf* received a rather irritable reception from reviewers, as if I had desecrated a monument. But *Beowulf* scholars all seem to enjoy it, and many have written to say so' (277–8). Clearly, many of these were teachers as well as scholars of *Beowulf*.

²¹ M. K. Duggan, 'Teaching Manuscripts from a Digital Library on the Web', *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 14 (1999), p. 151–9.

²² M. Twycross, 'Teaching Palaeography on the Web', *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 14 (1999), p. 257.

ments, composition of e-mail, and Internet research. The purpose of this traditional core course is for students to develop understanding and appreciation of British literary classics in their historical context. Pace students, many of them recent immigrants (not always with a firm grasp of English), most the first generation in their families to attend college, work together, as well as individually, on a number of multimedia projects in which they discuss *Beowulf*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, stories from the Arthurian Legend and Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The best student work is then published on the Grendel site.²³

The many informative sites relating to medieval manuscripts on the Web have increased student awareness and use of these manuscripts in their own work. After several site-search assignments pertaining to medieval history, texts and manuscripts, students become familiar with manuscripts and readily incorporate them, with discussion of text, into their own projects. Kim Neiningner, a student in the class, created an elegant and content-driven site on *Beowulf*, for example, reproducing the first manuscript page from the Electronic *Beowulf*, as an opening illustration.²⁴

Much like early blockbooks or glossed legal texts, the Internet is a non-linear medium; the reader does not start at the beginning and end at the ending but can leap from place to place, from Anglo-Saxon manuscript to a map outlining Viking raids, for example, to a text about Anglo-Saxon history. Ideas can be associated and linked in creative ways. In the class, we encourage students to replicate and produce their own manuscripts, visual representations of the text at hand adapted to the Internet. In response to an assignment to adapt *The Tragedy of King Lear* to an electronic format, for instance, Russian students created a glossed text of the play. The speeches of various characters are color-coded, the text linked to definitions and explanations of difficult terms. In many cases, these 'difficult' terms were difficult for the Russian students to understand, though perhaps not for a native speaker.²⁵

Finally, students are writing not only for their teachers but for each other and for a larger public audience. Many of the students have received e-mail

²³ For further discussion of the class, see M. Driver and J. Meyer, 'Beowulf to Lear: Text, Image and Hypertext', in *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 14 (1999), 223-38; 'Web Research and Hypermedia: Tools for Engaged Learning', with L. Anstendig and J. Meyer, *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching* 9 (1998), 69-91. Student work on the site may be accessed at <csis.pace.edu/grendel>. Another website developed by Martha Driver with Pace University graduate student Denise Cox, 'The Medieval Woman at Work and at Play', is described in M. W. Driver and D. McGrady, 'Teaching about Women with Multimedia', *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 23 (1997), 21-3.

²⁴ See Kim Neiningner, *Grendel's Mother's Attack* (Fall 1996), Pace University, Online, Internet, September 1999 <csis.pace.edu/grendel>.

²⁵ Yulia Azarova, Regina Vander, Oleg Gurvitz, *Lear III.iv* (Fall 1997), Pace University, Online, Internet, September 1999 <csis.pace.edu/grendel>.

requests from students around the world to engage in further discussion of *Beowulf* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. James Sigona, a nineteen-year-old student who composed a Chaucer page (and re-wrote it at least five times before it was posted on the site), received many letters about his page, including one from Brian McCauley of Woodberry Forest School in Virginia, who wrote 'Our links committee selected your site as one of the best Chaucer sites on the internet. With your permission, we would like to link to your site.'²⁶ Based on the verbal Chaucer portrait he had created for the Grendel site (illustrated with reproductions of the Hoccleve Chaucer portrait and one of the sixteenth-century paintings), Sigona was also approached by a well-known publisher about the possibility of his producing a Chaucer textbook(!).

The Internet provides these students with ready access to manuscript materials in a way our university library can not. Students learn to pay close attention to text and to the history of the text. In designing their own webpages, they experiment with relationships between text and image. They also instruct and inform their professors about available sites and about technology. Finally, when their work for the class is published on the Grendel site, they too become recognized as scholars, and even as experts, entering the 'global academic community', and becoming members of a public and visible group of scholars engaged in electronic learning.

In *The Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer tells us that just as new corn rises from old fields, 'out of olde bokes, in good feyth, Cometh al this newe science that men lere' (lines 24-5). Internet sites, no matter how well designed, cannot entirely replace traditional manuscript study, that is, physical examination of the 'olde bokes' and full investigation of their textual history. They do, however, provide an excellent introduction to the subject and build enthusiasm among a new generation of students, the new corn, if you will, among them, future scholars of medieval manuscripts. While we cannot entirely predict the paths education will take in the twenty-first century, we can shape the educational experience of students, training them to observe and describe manuscripts and to value the history of the book. Use of the Internet, along with the CD-ROM, is surely one new direction in medieval manuscript studies that is already being taken.

²⁶ E-mail sent to James Sigona by Brian McCauley, Woodberry Forest School, 26 February 1998.

Representing the Middle English Manuscript

A. S. G. EDWARDS

The relationship between older texts and post-medieval strategies for representing them goes back to the beginnings of printing in England. The earliest printers reflected some awareness of the distinctiveness of their received materials. Caxton, for example, included a thorn sort in his fonts for printing Middle English.¹ In the mid-sixteenth century John Day printed the first book using specially cut Anglo-Saxon types.² But for about 250 years after the introduction of printing into England the standard form of representing Middle English was by black letter. A typographic form that was initially the norm for all printing became increasingly restricted to certain specific categories of texts after the introduction of roman and italic fonts to England in the early sixteenth century. All editions of Chaucer down to 1721, for instance, were printed in this way, and it was the conventional way of representing passages of Middle English in works printed in other types. This strategy obviously both signified the historical distance separating the original from the present and embodied it in what was increasingly from the early sixteenth century an 'archaic' form, one that offered a visual correlative to the lexical, dialectal and syntactical antiquity of the original.

Such signalling is itself a reflection of the increasing incomprehension in the post-medieval period about Middle English. Urry's 1721 Chaucer edition, the first printed in roman type, is, among other things, an acknowledgement that the distance of time had created the need for other strategies than black letter to represent what was, in effect, now an alien language.³ The introduction of roman type generally to represent Middle English in the eighteenth century became linked to two opposite tendencies: on the one hand, the beginning of modernization, seen, for instance, in the growing number of

¹ I owe this point to Dr K. D. Lowe who will discuss this aspect of Caxton's typography in a forthcoming study.

² See J. Bromwich, 'The First Book Printed in Anglo-Saxon Type', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 3 (1959-63), 265-91; see also P. J. Lucas, 'A Testimonie of Very Ancient Tyme? Some Manuscript Models for the Parkerian Anglo-Saxon Type-Designs', in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers*, ed. P. R. Robinson and R. Zim (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 148-88.

³ For general discussion of Urry's edition, including its typography, see W. Alderson and A. C. Henderson, *Chaucer and Augustan Scholarship* (Berkeley, CA, 1970), pp. 69-140.

rewritings of the works of Chaucer and the inventions of Thomas Percy in the various editions of his *Reliques*; and on the other, the beginnings of a desire to represent Middle English more faithfully, that seems to have begun in the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁴

The earlier part of the nineteenth century saw the burgeoning of scholarly clubs, societies and series to supplement and enlarge the activities of the Society of Antiquaries, extant in different forms since Elizabethan times: the Roxburghe Club (1812), the Bannatyne Club (1825), the Camden Society in 1838, the Percy Society in 1840, all served in various ways to turn attention back to manuscript study and to seek to present versions of Middle English texts that could be deemed more faithful than their predecessors.⁵

But faithful to what? Fidelity has different potentialities: faithfulness to a witness, in the form of an actual or type facsimile; fidelity to the text, in the form of a critical edition, involving some form of eclecticism drawing from the readings of different witnesses; or fidelity to the historical situation of the text.

The most sophisticated understanding of these different potentialities in this period is to be found in the activities of Frederic Madden. Madden was, like Humfrey Wanley, his only real predecessor as an English palaeographer, almost entirely self educated. In 1825, after some struggle, he obtained employment in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum, of which he subsequently became Keeper.⁶ Shortly after his appointment there, having been sent to Oxford to transcribe some manuscripts, Madden came across Laud 108 in the Bodleian Library and identified in it the Middle English romance of *Havelok the Dane*. His edition of the romance was published three years later, in 1828, under the auspices of the Roxburghe Club in an edition of sixty-two copies.⁷ Madden was then twenty-seven.

Madden's early work as editor, both for the Club and in other editions is of prime importance to the history of the representation of Middle English. His edition of *Havelok* has been hailed as 'a landmark in the study of English literature' in its establishing of what was to be 'the standard form for all editions of old English texts'.⁸ But as significant as the edition's scholarship was the presentation of the manuscript,⁹ the way the text is given printed

⁴ For a survey of such trends see A. S. G. Edwards, 'Observations on the History of Middle English Editing', in *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 34–48.

⁵ For some account of these and other related scholarly societies see H. R. Steeves, *Learned Societies and English Literary Scholarship in Great Britain and the United States* (New York, 1913).

⁶ For a biography of Madden see R. W. and Gretchen P. Ackerman, *Sir Frederic Madden: A Biographical Sketch and Bibliography* (New York, 1979).

⁷ *The Ancient English Romance of Havelok the Dane* (London, 1828).

⁸ N. J. Barker, *The Publications of the Roxburghe Club* (Cambridge, 1964), p. 17.

⁹ Madden also prints an Anglo-Norman manuscript of *Havelok*.

form. It is this matter, rather than Madden's great achievements as editor, that concerns me here. His work evidences a deep preoccupation with the ways in which the forms of the manuscript should be faithfully reflected in his printed text. Madden's stated intention was conservative in its fidelity to his source:

In copying from these Mss. the Editor has scrupulously adhered to the orthography of each, and has only assumed the liberty, authorized by everyone who has preceded him in the task, of introducing marks of punctuation, of dividing or uniting words improperly connected or disjoined by the scribe, of occasionally correcting the errors occasioned by a letter manifestly false . . . and of substituting Capital letters for smaller ones, when required.¹⁰

In addition, thorn and wynn were replaced by modern equivalents and manuscript contractions were silently expanded. He concludes: 'with these exceptions the transcripts will be found to correspond literally with their respective originals' (p. liv).¹¹ His concern was clearly to strike a balance between the faithful representation of the manuscript and a wish to offer not simply a type facsimile, but a text that was simultaneously accurate and accessible; the latter concern is also reflected in the use of roman type (Plate 1).

Madden does not seem to have been content with the outcome. Four years later, in 1832, he undertook his second volume for the Roxburghe Club, an edition of *William and the Werewolf* from the unique manuscript, King's College, Cambridge MS 13 (1).¹² In it he adopts a different model for manuscript representation: the type facsimile, in which typography is used to try and represent graphically the Middle English original, contractions and all. Madden writes:

The Romance has been printed, as nearly as possible, in exact accordance with the Ms. and not the slightest liberty has been taken, either with the punctuation or orthography. It is, in short, as near a fac-simile of the original, as could be imitated by typography.¹³

The text is in black letter, thorns and yoghs are preserved, as are manuscript contractions (Plate 2). The text is unemended, although there is a series of 'Corrections to the MS' following the text and keyed to it by superscript numbers and a glossary, which is of limited value since it is keyed to line-numbers absent from the text. All in all it represents a new attempt to create a transparent text, one unimpeded by the presence of an editor, but in which

¹⁰ *Havelok the Dane*, p. liv.

¹¹ The claim is not wholly accurate: he does occasionally add words or, more rarely, whole lines, from conjecture. These are invariably placed within square brackets and sometimes noted as emendations at the foot of the appropriate page.

¹² *The Ancient English Romance of William and the Werewolf* (London, 1832).

¹³ *William and the Werewolf*, p. xvii.

For ther is mani god man inne,
 Ther thou mayt thi mete winne.
 But wo is me ! thou art so naked,
 Of mi seyl Y wolde the were maked
 A cloth, thou mithest inne gongen, 855
 Sone, no cold that thu ne fonge."

[col. 2.] **H**e tok the ³shres of the nayl,
 And made him a couel of the sayl,
 And Hauelok dide it sone on ;
 Hauede '[he] neyther hosen ne shon, 860
 Ne none kines othe wede ;
 To Lincolne barfot he yede.
 Hwan he kam the, he was ful wil,
 Ne hauede he no frend to gangen til ;
 Two dayes ther fastinde he yede, 865
 That non for his werk wolde him fede ;
 The thridde day herde he calle :
 " Bermen, bermen, hider forth alle !"
 Sprongen forth so sparke on glede,
 [Of no man ne hauede he drede.]⁵ 870
 Hauelok shof dun nyne or ten,
 Rith amidewarde the fen,
 And stute forth to the kok,
 [Ther the herles mete he tok,]
 That he bouthe at the brigge : 875
 The bermen let he alle ligge,

³ Qu. sheres.

⁴ V. Gloss. v. Hc.

⁵ Cf. v. 90. Here and below an additional line seems requisite.

And bar the mete to the castel,
 And gat him there a ferthing wastel.
Thet other day kepte he the ok
 Swithe yerne the erles kok, 880
 Til that he say him on the *bigge,
 And bi him mani fishes ligge.
 The herles mete hauede he bouth,
 Of Cornwalie, and kalde oft:
 "Bermen, bermen, hider swithe!" 885
 Hauelok it herde, and was ful blithe,
 That he herd "bermen" calle;
 Alle made he hem dun falle,
 That in his gate yeden and stode,
 Wel sixtene laddes gode. 890
 Als he lep the kok til,
 He shof hem alle upon an hyl;
 Astirte til him with his rippe,
 And bigan the fish to kippe.
 He bar up wel a carte lode 895
 Of segges, laxes, of playces brode,
 Of grete laumprees, and of eles;
 Sparede he neyther tos ne heles,
 Til that he to the castel cam,
 That men fro him his birthene nam. 900
 Than men haueden holpen him doun
 With the birthene of his croun,
 The kok stod, and on him low,
 And thoute him stalworthe man ynow,

* Qu. brigge.

& wíztly wrapped hem to gadere wíttow for soþe
 & bliþe were þei boþe þanne to bi hold on oþer
 f or feiþli a fourtenízt nō hadde seiþe oþeres face
 þ anne clípt þei & kest for al here cares colde
 & wíllm̃ ful wíztly waitid out of þe caue
 & bi huld ful busili a boutē on eche a side
 z if eny wízt were walkende but he nō seiþe
 h e lauzt loueli Meliours & ladde hire bi þe honde
 c loþed in here cloþes out of þe caue þei went
 w íþ hem boþe bere felles þei bere in here armes
 s o loþ hem was þo to lese or leue hem bi hinde
 & deden hem deliúſly ouer dales and ʒ helles
 f errest fro alle weies þer any folk walkes
 d olfulli þei were adrad dar no mō hem wíte
 [fol. 36.] l ast þei schuld mete any man þat mízst hē be wrie
 b ut þan as god wold or eny man hem seye
 þ ei hade walked in þat wíse wel a þre myle
 & founden þan a fayr forest floriched ful þík
 & þider wíztly þei went wel bñparceþued
 w hat of here hard heízing & of þe hote weder
 M eliours was al mat sche ne mízst no further
 & preſtly in a þicke place of þat prís wode
 w el out frō alle weyes for wery þei hem rested
 & þonked god gretliche þat so godliche hem saued
 & seþþen softli to slepe samen þei hem leide
 a s þei þat were wery for waked to fore
 D ouz leue we of hem a while & speke we a nob'
 If or of þe wítti werwolf a while wol i telle

“ Wy þrefsch on, þ^u þro mon, þ^u þreteȝ to longe, 2300
 I hope þat þi hert arȝe wyth þyn awen seluen.”
 “ For soþe,” q þat oþ^{er} freke, “ so felly þ^u spekeȝ, || riȝt nowe.”
 I wyl no leng^{er} on lyte lette þin ernde,
 þēne tas he¹ hȝ stryȝe to stryke, 2305
 & frouȝes boþe lyppe & browe,
 No meruayle þaȝ hȝ myȝlyke,
 þat hoped of no refcowe.

XIV.

He lyftes lyȝtly his lome, & let hit doū fayre,
 {fol. 122.] Wt þe barbe of þe bitte bi þe bare nek; 2310
 þaȝ he homered heȝly, hurt hȝ no more,
 Bot snyrt hȝ on þat on fyde, þat seuȝed þe hyde;
 þe scharp schrank to þe flesche þurȝ þe ſchyre grece,
 þat þe ſchene blod ou^{er} his schulderes ſchot to þe erȝe.
 & quen þe burne ſeȝ þe blode blenk on þe inawe, 2315
 He ſprit forth ſpēne fote more þē a ſpere lenȝe,
 Hent heȝly his helme, & on his hed caſt,
 Schot w^{ith} his ſchuldereȝ his fayre ſchelde vnder,
 Braydeȝ out a bryȝt ſworde, & bremely he ſpekeȝ;
 Neu^{er} ſyn þat he watȝ burne borne of his moder, 2320
 Watȝ he neu^{er} ī þis worlde, wyȝe half ſo blyȝe:—
 “ Blȝne, burne, of þy bur, bede me no mo;
 I haf a ſtroke ī þis ſted w^{ith} oute ſtryf hent,
 & if þow recheȝ me any mo, I redyly ſchal quyte, || & ſoo;
 & ȝelde ȝederly aȝayn, & þ^{ou} to ȝe tryſt,
 Bot on ſtroke here me falleȝ,
 þe couenaūt ſchap ryȝt ſoo,

¹ he he, *MS.*

Plate 3 From Sir Frederic Madden's edition of *Syr Gawayne* poems for the Bannatyne Club (1839), p. 51.

the manuscript is permitted to speak for itself – or rather, not speak, but simply be. Notions of utility have been subsumed by those of accuracy to create a paradoxical text, largely inaccessible because of its very fidelity. It is not a facsimile, but a representation of a facsimile, an attempt to construct a form that signifies the alterity of the medieval manuscript while not embodying it. The motives behind the attempt are presumably the outcome of a desire to make as close to an exact representation as was possible within the conventions of typography.

Madden's attempt to use the type facsimile to stand for the manuscript facsimile¹⁴ is not in itself new even in English literature – although his use of black letter in this context may be – and his efforts would not warrant much attention were it not for the fact that they seem to have led him to a reconsideration of various aspects of manuscript representation. His changing position can be seen in his next edition of Middle English texts, his famous anthology for the Bannatyne Club, *Syr Gawayne: A Collection of Ancient Romance-Poems by Scottish and English Authors*, which appeared in 1839. The importance of the collection has long been appreciated as an editorial achievement: it provides the first edition of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as well as new editions of *The Awntyrs of Arthur*, *Golagros & Gawain*, *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle*, *The Jest of Sir Gawain*, *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell* and several romances from the Percy Folio: *The Green Knight*, *The Turk & Gawain*, *The Carl of Carlisle*, *Arthur and the King of Cornwall*, *The Marriage of Sir Gawain*. It forms an important landmark in the study of Arthurian literature.

Apart from its editorial and historical importance, the collection has significance in what it reveals about Madden's shifting attitude towards the manuscripts themselves. At an editorial level the concern is again with the faithful representation of the manuscript text. Once again, as with *Havelok the Dane*, Madden adopts a quasi-facsimile procedure, abandoning black letter and signalling final flourishes, barred -lls and representing contractions typographically. There is a separate list of contracted forms and their interpretation. The text is occasionally emended and the fact properly noted at the foot of the page (Plate 3).

Although there is clearly some retreat from the austerity of *William and the Werewolf*, the edition continues Madden's efforts to present the actual manuscript in as unmediated a way as possible, consistent with intelligibility. But in an important respect it marks a clear advance over Madden's earlier editorial work: his text is preceded by a lengthy 'Description of the Manuscripts Used in the Present Volume' (pp. xlvii–lxviii). Once again, Madden is not the first editor to feel the necessity to offer some account of his sources. The first who seems to have perceived the need to make a sustained attempt

¹⁴ On the development of the facsimile see Lucas (note 2 above). The earliest Middle English one of which I am aware is *The Forme of Cury* (1786).

at manuscript description for Middle English verse texts was Urry in his 1721 Chaucer. This is textually an important edition, although his extensive metrical emendations have earned him the obloquy of posterity. He did, however, not only edit the text afresh from the manuscripts (the title-page announced that it had been 'compared with the former editions, and many valuable MSS'), he also provided a corpus of manuscript descriptions. His descriptions constitute some attempt to present the manuscripts not only textually, but also codicologically. Urry tries to give some account of the physical structure of the various witnesses and such matters as their decoration. The results are of a fairly primitive kind ('a very fair MS on velom'; 'most miserably mangled, a great many leaves being cut out, in every part of it'; 'a fair Book, but is imperfect at the beginning and end',¹⁵ although it should also be noted that Urry's original notes on the manuscripts seem to have been considerably more detailed than those finally published in his posthumous edition),¹⁶ but they mark a definite advance in manuscript study: for the first time manuscript and text are explicitly connected and the user is given some consciousness of the physical objects through which texts are transmitted. Urry seems to have been the first Middle English editor to feel the need to be both candid and (by his lights) precise about the sources out of which he was constructing his text.

Madden's descriptions, in contrast to those in Urry and in virtually all of Madden's other predecessors, are notable for their detail and level of accuracy.¹⁷ They vary in their emphases. In the case of Cotton Nero A. x, great weight is given to an account of the illustrations, together with a facsimile plate of the manuscript; for the others, some of them large and complex manuscripts, like Lincoln Cathedral 91 or NLW Porkington 10, there are full lists of contents and bibliographical and textual notes. These descriptions are clearly intended to complement his aims in the presentation of the text to give as comprehensive an account as possible of the manuscript as a physical construct.

The overall effect of this is a compilation which, with its supporting apparatus of Introduction, Manuscript Descriptions, Notes and Glossary,

¹⁵ The preface to Urry's edition is unpaginated.

¹⁶ For some discussion of the unpublished drafts of manuscript descriptions for Urry's edition see A. S. G. Edwards, 'The "Worsley" Manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*', *Library* 6th ser. 7 (1985), 54-8.

¹⁷ Madden's own earlier forays into manuscript description reveal some evolution in his method. Although in *Havelok* he announces his intention 'to describe the Ms.' (p. lii), description is limited to the provision of a facsimile of the opening lines (p. liii). In *William and the Werewolf* he gives 'a brief description of the Ms . . . a moderate sized folio, written on vellum soon after the middle of the 14th century, and consisting of 130 folios, 82 of which are occupied by the Romance. A quire is wanting at the commencement, and a single leaf shortly after . . .'. There are further notes on the other contents and the script, together with a facsimile of the opening lines (pp. xvi-xvii).

provides for the first time the complete set of components of a modern critical edition. But in doing this Madden also, again for the first time, makes his audience conscious not just of the forms, but of the origins of his texts, of their underlying manuscript sources and the actual physical, visual and palaeographic forms of them. As with his earlier editions, although in different ways, it is the *manuscript*, not editorial ingenuity or scholarship that is privileged here. Apart from its importance as an edition, it is the first systematic attempt at contextualizing the texts being edited in terms of their manuscript derivations.

While Madden seems to have conceived of editing as an historical activity, one in which form as well as content find a place, his was a direction which posterity has largely chosen not to pursue. For it was the text, not necessarily simple, but increasingly held to possess the potential to be made pure, that increasingly commanded attention rather than any searching interest in its manuscript forms. Such approaches were in fact consolidated in the more professionalized approaches to editing that came in the later nineteenth century with the appearance of a new cadre of professional academics, the outriders of the emerging discipline of English Studies.¹⁸ Chief among these is the figure of Walter Skeat. Skeat is justly acclaimed as an editor,¹⁹ but important aspects of his genius curiously inhibited the study of Middle English manuscripts, particularly as reflected in the poetic texts that were his particular interest.

The fundamental problem was the paradigm that defined Skeat's approach to manuscripts. It was an approach fundamentally predicated on a belief in reason, that the evidence could be accommodated into orderly forms, and that if it couldn't it must be. It was a sense of method that gave us, for example, such editorial constructs as the Bradshaw Shift in the *Canterbury Tales*²⁰ and the three versions of *Piers Plowman*.²¹ He was not interested in manuscripts as artefacts or constructs, in any aspects of what we would now term their codicology, but as editorial fodder, nutritional material to feed his grand design, the critical edition.

The creation of the critical edition has a number of consequences for the student of manuscripts. It is not concerned to privilege a form of the manuscript text, as was the case with Madden's editions, but to create a form that has previously not existed. In practice this means that both many of the manuscripts of a work and all of the aspects of the manuscript apart from

¹⁸ For an account of its development see D. J. Palmer, *The Rise of English Studies* (London, 1965).

¹⁹ See A. S. G. Edwards, 'W. W. Skeat', in *Editing Chaucer: The Great Tradition*, ed. Paul Ruggiers (Norman, OK, 1984), pp. 171–89, 280–5.

²⁰ On Skeat's use of the Bradshaw Shift see Edwards, 'W. W. Skeat', pp. 181–2.

²¹ For discussion of Skeat's contribution to the editing of *Piers Plowman* see Charlotte Brewer, *Editing Piers Plowman: The Evolution of the Text* (Cambridge, 1996), especially pp. 91–178.

the text can be ignored since they only contribute in a limited way, if at all, to the design of the critical edition, only insofar, that is, as they furnish particular verbal data that could contribute to it. Hence, variant textual forms are to be disregarded once it has been determined that they are variant.

For students of manuscripts the critical edition, as has often been pointed out in recent years, leads only to radical decontextualization, removing the text itself from any connection with the forms in which it was transmitted, whereby texts are isolated from crucial facts of their production that have potential bearing on their meaning: what forms of script were used to copy it; how many scribes; what materials were used in its construction; if (and if so how) it was decorated; if what dialect(s) it may have been written; and whether it was collocated with other texts and whether they are verse or prose. In this sense what we have is clearly an act of dehistoricization, one that poses some questions about our modern relationship to medieval manuscript artifacts.²²

Such a process is generally facilitated by the nature of manuscript description in many Middle English editions from the latter part of the nineteenth century, which do not seem to be informed by any sense that such description might possess any functional purpose in relation to the texts being edited. Not infrequently description exists in a state of bibliographical suspension, offering little or no connection between the material and the textual forms of a work. It is only in very rare instances, like the first volume of Manly and Rickert²³ or Henry Bergen's descriptions of Lydgate's *Troy Book* and *Fall of Princes* manuscripts,²⁴ that there is any sustained attempt to integrate textual and codicological information to give a coherent account of the manuscript, or any clear sense of any difference between the purposes of a description in an edition as distinct from that in a catalogue.²⁵

Such uncertainty about the relationship between edition and manuscript is further evidenced by one small but revealing convention, that of the illustrative plate to accompany an edition. This is a practice that seems to have begun to emerge in the latter part of the nineteenth century.²⁶ The reasons for

²² See the valuable discussion by Ralph Hanna III 'Producing Manuscripts and Editions', in *Crux and Controversy in Middle English Textual Criticism*, ed. A. J. Minnis and Charlotte Brewer (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 109–30 (especially 110–11) to which this paragraph is indebted.

²³ J. M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales* (Chicago, 1940), vol. 1.

²⁴ *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, part IV, ed. H. Bergen, EETS e.s. 124 (1927); *Lydgate's Troy Book*, part IV, ed. H. Bergen, EETS e.s. 126 (1935).

²⁵ For some discussion of the issues involved in such a distinction see A. S. G. Edwards. 'Manuscript and Text', in *A Guide to Editing Middle English*, ed. D. J. Moffat and V. McCarren (Ann Arbor, 1998), pp. 159–68.

²⁶ I have not made an exhaustive attempt to establish when this practice began. Once again, Madden's editing seems relevant. In both his *Havelok* and *William and the Werewolf* editions he offers facsimiles of the opening lines of each romance to enable comparison with his treatment of the text; see *Havelok*, p. liii, *William*, p. xvi.

including one are not usually explained. It is presumably not intended to be employed in the way it usually is, to give the vengeful reviewer some means of castigating the editor's inaccuracy. If it is intended to give some whiff of the flavour of the manuscript original then it is interesting to note that none of the most widely discussed or widely used modern editions of Middle English texts find it necessary to subscribe to such a practice. Neither the Athlone editions of the A-, B- and C-texts of *Piers Plowman*²⁷ nor the edition of the so-called Z-text²⁸ include any. None of the most widely circulating modern editions of Chaucer – the collected editions by W. W. Skeat, F. N. Robinson, A. C. Baugh, the Riverside Chaucer, or Barry Windeatt's edition of *Troilus & Criseyde*²⁹ has felt it appropriate to display for comparison any of the manuscript sources from which its text or texts are derived, or, indeed, to include manuscript descriptions.

One may wonder why this should be so. It can hardly be simply expense. Robinson, Baugh, and Riverside all include copies of author portraits, for example. Rather, it seems linked to a sense of the critical edition as a construct in which the text exists as something quite separate from the sources upon which it is based. In such respects the edition becomes a means of effectively separating the reader/user from any consciousness of the physical reality of these sources and their possible implications – that manuscripts are messy, error prone and divergent. The inclusion of author portraits may not be without significance. It valorizes the author and/or the works rather than the text by separating the text from its ultimate sources. It also valorizes the editorial project in isolation from the manuscripts that underpin it, which are seen solely as constructions of discrete lexical units. The editorial presentation of manuscript readings serves to disembodify them, not present them as undertakings that may receive aspects of their meaning and purpose in the manuscript contexts in which they occur, whether these be those of physical form, materials, script or decoration. Nor is this disregard of the manuscripts limited to non-verbal aspects. It seems worth noting that virtually no modern edition of Chaucer preserves all of the orthography, the rubrication and the glosses of Chaucer's texts, or gives any indication of the evidence of contemporary or near contemporary response to them in the forms of annotation or deletion. These are treated as objects of separate study.

Nor does one obvious dimension of manuscript study seem to offer much of a way forward. The agenda for manuscript facsimile production in England has been largely set by the Roxburghe Club. The first partial

²⁷ *Piers Plowman: The A-Version*, ed. G. Kane (London, 1960); *Piers Plowman: The B-Version*, ed. G. Kane and E. T. Donaldson (London, 1975); *Piers Plowman: The C-Version*, ed. G. Kane and G. Russell (London, 1996).

²⁸ Ed. A. G. Rigg and Charlotte Brewer (Toronto, 1983).

²⁹ John Hurt Fisher's edition of *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer*, 2nd edn (New York, 1989) is the exception to this tendency.

facsimile appeared in H. O. Coxe's edition of the Chandos Herald's *Life of the Black Prince* (1842). Henceforward the facsimile became a feature of Roxburghe books, although the first complete facsimile of a manuscript, *The Apocalypse of St John*, did not appear until 1876. It was to be more than a century after this before the Club produced its first and only facsimile of a Middle English manuscript, Kathleen Scott's *Mirror of the World*.³⁰ When manuscript study is driven by connoisseurs and art historians, Middle English is likely to come off rather badly. It is not coincidental that the first full facsimile of a Middle English manuscript was one of the Ellesmere, which appeared in 1911,³¹ to be followed before the Second World War only by the EETS facsimile of BL Cotton Nero A. x³² (which at least had some pictures, however awful) and the Huntington facsimile of HM 143 (of *Piers Plowman*),³³ the latter virtually the first reproduction of any part of any *Piers* manuscript. After the war there was a trickle of EETS facsimiles³⁴ that stands in contrast to the explosion of more recent activity that has made available to us a number of very important manuscripts. Predictably enough this activity is heavily Chaucer-driven, as in the series of facsimiles produced by the Chaucer Variorum; but it does also include a few significant manuscripts of romance and *Piers Plowman* and occasionally of prose texts as with Kathleen Scott's Roxburghe facsimile. We still have virtually no Gower or Lydgate or Hoccleve nor, apart from the romance facsimiles, any attempt to represent the range of possibilities of manuscript production: the anthology, the miscellany, the commonplace book. This trend is clearly short-lived. The facsimile remains the tool or plaything of the collector, on simple economic grounds: its costs place it beyond the reach of most scholars.³⁵

What possibility is there of recovering any sense of the transparency of the medieval text in relation to its multiple, complex, at times textually highly variant aspects, while simultaneously actually making it accessible in a textually responsible form? It is perhaps here that the computer may serve some real purpose. It may be able to take us beyond the facsimile to a form of construction and presentation that not simply represents, but offers the opportunity to study in a variety of ways pertinent formal aspects of the manuscript. It would include full-colour reproduction of the originals, appropriate physical and art historical analysis, and transcriptions of all

³⁰ Oxford, 1980.

³¹ Ed. W. W. Skeat (London, 1911); see Richard Beadle, 'Facsimiles of Middle English Manuscripts', in Moffat and McCarren, eds., *A Guide to Editing Middle English*, pp. 319–34, for full details of such facsimiles as are noted below.

³² Introd. by I. Gollancz (1923).

³³ Introd. by R. W. Chambers, R. B. Haselden and H. C. Schulz (San Marino, CA, 1936).

³⁴ Mainly edited by N. R. Ker: Bodley 34 (1960), *The Owl and the Nightingale* (1963), BL MS Harley 2253 (1965).

³⁵ I say this with some feeling as the co-editor, with Julia Boffey and Bruce Barker-Benfield, of a quite well-subsidized facsimile of a Middle English manuscript, Bodleian Library Arch. Selden. B. 24 (Cambridge, 1997), that retails for £395.

witnesses programmed so that individual lines could be juxtaposed against their corresponding originals. Some of this (though not the last) is already being done, with variable degrees of success, in some current undertakings like the Electronic Canterbury Tales Project, which includes transcripts, but not full accompanying facsimiles, of all surviving witnesses for the appropriate portion of the text. Ideally one does want full linkage to other versions in a way that relates facsimile, transcript and critical edition. There is some value perhaps in being able to retain within the same medium the distinctiveness of individual versions, full representation of the manuscript forms of those versions and the potential to deploy that cumulated evidence in various ways. Such potentialities might serve to make more fruitfully complex our relationship as modern readers to the medieval texts we read, not simply by enabling the recovery of the variable text rather than just the critical edition, but also by making possible the establishing of the salient formal aspects of a manuscript and their significance.

It may reasonably be asked what purpose such an elaborate undertaking would actually serve. It has some potential to contribute to the creation of a critical text. But you don't really need a computer to do that. It will certainly not, as has been claimed recently for the Electronic Chaucer Project currently being published by Cambridge University Press, enable one to recover 'the text that Chaucer actually left behind'.³⁶ Nor, as some recent theorists like Tim Machan have suggested,³⁷ will computerization move editing onto some higher plane of method. Garbage in, garbage out. And while the aim of editing is actually to seek to transcend what the manuscripts offer us, the computer may paradoxically help to bring us closer to the actual state of those manuscripts with its capacity for rapid, multiple representation, transposition and enhancement of such sources. The implications of such a tool extend beyond Middle English verse, but the aspects of the history of its representation I have tried to sketch may indicate its obvious potentiality. Even if we do not wish to represent in an edited form distinctive aspects of original sources, they may possess an evidential value that will enable us to situate them geographically, socially, culturally. The post-medieval history of Middle English verse suggests an unwillingness to acknowledge both the provisionality of any attempt at critical editing and the historical importance of the forms in which it has been transmitted. The dehistoricization that I have sought to stress is a consequence of connection between the two factors. Once the text becomes the verbal icon, removed from its physical contexts, it is more readily presented in forms that, like for example the B-Text of *Piers Plowman*, have limited constraining relationship to any actuality. While it

³⁶ This is the claim made by Peter Robinson in a letter to *The Times* (London), 14 July 1998, p. 19. It is difficult to believe it could be made by someone with first-hand experience of editing Middle English texts.

³⁷ T. W. Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* (Charlottesville, VA, 1994), pp. 190–2.

would be probably too much to hope that modern editors could – or should – attempt to replicate the reality if not the actuality of medieval texts in the way that Derek Pearsall has suggested for the *Canterbury Tales* – which he suggests should be edited in a series of ‘fragments in folders’³⁸ – his proposal does emphasize the relationship between form, text and meaning in a way that is relevant to the issues I have been discussing. The attempt to historicize the text can, I have tried to suggest, profitably go further in any sustained attempt to enable us to more understand the relationship between the modern edition and its original sources.

³⁸ *The Canterbury Tales* (London, 1985), p. 23.

Skins, Sheets and Quires

J. P. GUMBERT

In a conference on New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies, the newer developments in codicology ought to be represented. I regret that no speaker was found for Quantitative Codicology;¹ but at least some quite technical aspects can be discussed. And although these matters are often of scant relevance for those scholars – surely the vast majority – who study medieval manuscripts for the sake of their texts, still they have their interest as part of the history of a craft; and from time to time they are relevant to text scholars as well.

I

Everybody knows what *folio*, *quarto* and *octavo* are. In the bibliography of the printed book these terms denote the *format*, that is: they indicate (in principle) that during printing two, four or eight leaves were attached, and that these constituted a whole sheet as produced by the paper mill. There is an advantage, especially for studying manuscript books, in distinguishing several aspects of format: first the question what part the leaf, as we see it in the book, was of the sheet as produced by the supplier (what I call the *material format*); and then the further question what leaves, if any, had been still attached during the production of the book. Actually, of course, one should ask these questions not about leaves but about bifolia, which are the real constituents of the book.

In paper manuscripts the material format can be seen in an instant (by the position of the chain and wire lines and of the watermark). Since most medieval paper was produced in two standard sizes (Chancery, around 42 × 30 cm, and Royal, around 60 × 42 cm), most manuscripts, which are

¹ Actually quantitative codicology is now as much French (and Italian) as material bibliography used to be Anglo-Saxon; in both cases the other community is the poorer for the lack of communication. The main books are, of course, C. Bozzolo and E. Ornato, *Pour une histoire du livre manuscrit au Moyen Âge: Trois essais de codicologie quantitative* (Paris, 1980, and *Supplément*, 1983); E. Ornato, *La face cachée du livre médiéval: L'histoire du livre vue par Ezio Ornato, ses amis et ses collègues* (Rome, 1997), a very thick but very worthwhile collection of articles.

almost without exception 2^{os}, 4^{os} or 8^{os} of these sizes, also have standard dimensions, with the Royal quarto, 30 × 20 cm, being the same size as the Chancery folio etc. (Incidentally I wish to propose that the material format of paper manuscripts should *always* be given in describing them, if only to distinguish manuscripts on Royal paper.)

For parchment (to which I shall confine the rest of my remarks) the matter is more difficult. Skins have neither standard sizes nor watermarks. Still it is possible in many cases (though certainly not always) to find the material format of a parchment book. One indication is the *dorsal stripe*, which is often quite clear, especially in Italian manuscripts. Others are the characteristic *marginal textures* that correspond to the soft and flexible parts of the skin next to the legs (the arm-pits and the groins, as it were). A few years ago I became aware of these features through the recent work of Frank Bischoff.² Noting the material format of parchment manuscripts allows one to calculate, by appropriate multiplication, the (approximate) size of the skin. It turns out that the skins used in Germany, France and (presumably) England were usually between 44 and 80 cm long (with a corresponding width), with a maximum at 68 cm (although longer skins, up to over 1 m, exist); most Italian skins are smaller, with maxima at 52 and 42 cm.³ (So the smallest of the current skins are almost exactly the size of Chancery paper – a fact that perhaps is not wholly accidental.)

So much for the simple question: what part of the skin is the bifolium? (Folio: the bifolium is an entire skin; quarto: it is a half skin; octavo: it is a quarter skin.) Now for the next question: if a bifolium is half a skin, where is the other half? In 1972 Léon Gilissen⁴ published his discovery that one can often see that two (or four) bifolia had originally formed one skin. He did this by observing surface features like pigmentation patterns, spots and discolorations, striations, or if you are lucky holes and old repairs of tears which run on from one leaf to another; I call these *bridge marks*. In most manuscripts one does not observe any bridge marks; also one should not be taken in too easily by too slight indications. (For instance, a vertical mark of dark colour, which perfectly fits in two leaves adjoining at the head, is often merely dirt which has crept in, vertically . . .)⁵

² F. M. Bischoff and M. Maniaci, 'Pergamentgrösse – Handschriftenformate – Lagenkonstruktion', *Scrittura e Civiltà* 19 (1995), 277–319 (pp. 282–3); F. M. Bischoff, *Urkundenformate im Mittelalter, Grösse, Format und Proportionen von Papsturkunden . . .* (11.–13. Jahrhundert), *Elementa diplomatica* 5 (Marburg, 1996), pp. 48–51.

³ J. P. Gumbert, 'Sizes and Formats', in *Ancient and Medieval Book Materials and Techniques*, ed. M. Maniaci and P. Munafò, *Studi e Testi* 357 and 358, 2 vols. (Vatican City, 1993), I, 227–63.

⁴ L. Gilissen, 'La composition des cahiers, le pliage du parchemin et l'imposition', *Scriptorium* 26 (1972), 3–33; reworked version in L. Gilissen, *Prolégomènes à la codicologie*, Les Publications de Scriptorium 7 (Gand, 1977), pp. 21–41 (and following chapters).

⁵ Gilissen's bridge marks are between *different* bifolia, which were adjacent when they

But there are enough manuscripts with clear and convincing bridge marks, so one can be sure that very often the two (or four) parts of one skin are now found within one quire. What is more, they are often found in the position they would have if the skin had simply been folded, like the sheets of printed books – the bifolia are *paired*. Gilissen established a list of all possible ways of folding one or two skins into a quarto or octavo quire; to each folding (*pliage*) there corresponds a certain pattern of possible pairings; and so, if one finds bridge marks, one can say to which of Gilissen's foldings they correspond.

Evidently this situation is connected with another discovery, published in 1940 by Charles Samaran,⁶ that manuscripts have sometimes been written on undivided sheets, which were really going to be folded just like the sheets of printed books. This technique is (somewhat improperly) called *imposition*. When Samaran discovered the phenomenon one could still think that scribes had learnt the technique from printers; but it has long become clear that the scribes were first. I feel a word is needed to indicate 'the piece of material containing two bifolia, which will eventually be separated but which are now still connected'; the obvious term would be *quadrifolium* (or *octifolium* for four bifolia, an octavo sheet, but these were rarer and I shall all but disregard them).

The fact that in many quires the bifolia are paired just as they would have been if they had been folded out of one skin suggested to Gilissen that they had actually been so folded, i.e., that quires were normally formed by folding

still formed part of the same skin on the frame. Recently R. G. Dennis, 'Notes Concerning *Le Pliage*', *Scriptorium* 47 (1993), 166–73, pointed out some interesting cases of bridge marks between different edges of the *same* bifolium. For these to be valid, in one case (Harvard MS Riant 89, pp. 168–9) we must assume a conical animal cut open in a strangely diagonal fashion, in the other (Harvard fMS Typ 138, pp. 169–170) a tubular one 60 cm long and only 13 cm in diameter – not even a dachshund would meet those specifications. I think such 'self-bridges' are illusory. The apparent bridging at the fore-edges of a quarto bifolium, as observed by Dennis in Typ 138, is the effect of the fact that animals are symmetrical. Most of the belly part of the skin is lost, having been used to tie the skin to the frame; the edges we see, which now are the fore-edges in a quarto manuscript (from skins 62 × 42), probably come more or less halfway down the flanks of the animal; being symmetrical, its skin structures at corresponding points would tend to be specularly similar.

⁶ C. Samaran, 'Manuscrits "imposés" à la manière typographique', *Mélanges en hommage . . . Fr. Martroye* (Paris, 1940), pp. 325–36, = (reduced facsimile) C. Samaran, *Une longue vie d'érudit: Recueil d'études . . .*, Hautes études médiévales et modernes 31, 2 vols. (Geneva, 1978), II, 547–61. On these books, see F. P. J. Obbema, 'Writing on Uncut Sheets', *Quaerendo* 8 (1978), 337–54; completely reworked and updated version: 'Een bijzondere manier van schrijven: werken op onopengesneden vellen', in P. Obbema, *De middeleeuwen in handen: Over de boekcultuur in de late middeleeuwen* (Hilversum, 1996), pp. 49–68. Also: Bozzolo and Ornato, *Pour une histoire . . .*, pp. 125–212. Latest: M. M. Smith, 'Imposition in Manuscripts: Evidence for the Use of Sense-Sequence Copying in a New Fragment', in *Making the Medieval Book: Techniques of Production*, ed. L. L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1995), pp. 145–56.

skins. (And forming a quire, that is: deciding which bifolia shall – barring accident – be part of this quire, is generally the very first step in making a book; pricking, the next step, is generally done in an already formed quire.) One of the interesting features of this idea is that this method would automatically produce quires which obey Gregory's Rule (that hair side faces hair side etc.); and it has actually been suggested that folding is the origin of that rule. If so, this would be an elegant solution, explaining at the same time why there is generally a preference for 'even' quires (of four, six, eight bifolia and so, rather than three or five), and opening up a charming vista of folding as a venerable and normal tradition, which in due time more or less naturally led to imposition.

II

However, matters are not so simple.

In the first place *folding*, in the sense that the quire is formed out of folded-but-as-yet-undivided quadrifolia, does not necessarily imply *imposition*, in the sense that writing was done on unfolded-but-as-yet-undivided quadrifolia. (Gilissen himself carefully avoided this erroneous assumption.⁷) A case in point is the unbound Durham manuscript discussed in 1972 by Ian Doyle.⁸ There some bifolia are still connected by bridges ('bolts') at the top in the fold. These might be the result of opening, for reading, a manuscript which had been written on unfolded quadrifolia; but they might equally well be the result of opening an unwritten quire, for writing, as the scribe progressed. And that is, I believe, what happened here: the quire was formed out of folded but as yet undivided quadrifolia, and progressively opened.

In the second place *pairing* does not necessarily imply *folding*: if the bifolia show bridge marks *as if* they had reached their present place in the quire as folded quadrifolia, that does not necessarily mean that they actually did so. This is a point where Gilissen went wrong. If you cut a skin into four bifolia (for an 8° book), the possible ways of arranging these four pieces into a quire are very numerous (6144, by Gilissen's reckoning);⁹ Gilissen was impressed by the very high odds against accidentally reaching precisely the arrangement that corresponds with the original folding, and considered that finding a pairing that fits one folding is virtually proof that that folding was applied. But he was wrong. If, in arranging the four pieces of one skin into a quire, you keep account of the Rule of Gregory, the odds are already much smaller (384);

⁷ *Prolégomènes*, p. 114.

⁸ A. I. Doyle, 'Further Considerations on Durham Cathedral Ms. A.IV.34', in *Varia codicologica* (Essays presented to G. I. Lieftinck, I), ed. J. P. Gumbert and M. J. M. de Haan (Amsterdam, 1972), pp. 35–47.

⁹ Gilissen, *Prolégomènes*, pp. 34–5.

and if you keep account also, as is natural, of the straight edges produced by your cuts (as against the more uneven edges of the original skin), it becomes *impossible* to arrange the four pieces in a way that does *not* correspond with one of Gilissen's foldings! regardless of the way you folded the skin in the first place, and even if you did not fold it at all but only cut it flat on the table.¹⁰

If you fold your skin and then divide it along the fold (into two bifolia, for a 4° book), and then fold and divide a second skin and stack it on top of the first, and so on, you will get a pile of separate bifolia, but unless something happens to disturb your pile they will be in the order they got by folding; if you then count sets of four bifolia and fold them into quires, the bifolia will be paired in the quires in a perfectly convincing manner, just as if they had entered the quire as quadrifolia, but actually you will have formed the quire in bifolia. This will, for instance, explain the findings of Frank Bischoff in twelfth-century German gospel books.¹¹ The very thoroughly treated vellum hardly has any bridge marks, but measurements of thickness provide a good indication that most quires show 'correct' pairing. However, now and then one of a pair of bifolia will have been replaced by a different half-skin (in order to keep particularly thin bifolia on the inside of the quire, or particularly fine bifolia there where minatures are to go); this shows that the bifolia, although paired in a manner that would suggest folding into quadrifolia, were indeed separate and could be replaced one by one.

Consider also quinions, which are almost the favourite quire type in Italy. Evidently a quinion cannot be constructed in a Gilissen-like manner. Yet in Italian quarto quinions, four of the five bifolia are often 'correctly' paired. Were the quires formed out of two quadrifolia plus a single bifolium? Rather one should believe that the sheets were divided into bifolia as soon as folded, and that the quires were formed of five already separate bifolia.

One should also point out that it is quite common to find in one manuscript parchment of several formats: folio and quarto, or quarto and octavo (or even all three in one book).¹² Even if the quarto and octavo bifolia are paired, one will not assume that some of the quires were worked one way and other

¹⁰ If one keeps account of Gregory's Rule and the straight-cut edge at the top, one has 24 possibilities left; two each of these correspond to the octavo foldings A B C D; four each conform to each of the two quarto foldings; eight do not correspond to a folding. If one keeps account of the straight-cut edge at the side as well, there are only eight possible combinations left, and *each* of these corresponds to one of the four octavo foldings (two each). There is in that case no way of arranging four pieces of one skin into a 'non-Gilissen' quire. (But it is not certain that one always did take account of straight edges, or that some edges were less straight than others.)

¹¹ F. M. Bischoff, 'Pergamentdicke und Lagenordnung: Beobachtungen zur Herstellungstechnik Helmarshausener Evangeliare', in *Pergament: Geschichte – Struktur – Restaurierung – Herstellung*, ed. P. Rück, Historische Hilfswissenschaften 2 (Sigmaringen, 1991), pp. 97–144.

¹² Gumbert, 'Sizes', p. 239.

quires another way, but that all were worked the same way – as separate bifolia, certainly if part of the book is folio, but probably also if the highest format is quarto.

Finally, there often are no pairings, no bridge marks. I do not mean the only too numerous cases where one does not see them at all, or only weak and possibly misleading ones, but manuscripts where one feels sure that adjoining bifolia were *not* attached previously, *not* paired. Again, I do not mean folio manuscripts, or ‘non-Gregorian’ manuscripts,¹³ where pairing is evidently out of question. What I am referring to are manuscripts with Gregorian quires, showing hairsides full of potential marks (stipple patterns, discolorations etc.), and not a single one of them fitting with what ought to be its partner bifolium. I have seen this particularly in Carolingian manuscripts – which, by the way, have a parchment that appears to have been treated in a rather different manner from the usual fashion in the later Middle Ages: it is full of striations, generally in all sorts of oblique directions. These striations ought to provide easy bridge marks; but they don’t. I have had the privilege of seeing one of Leiden’s great ninth-century Cicero manuscripts (Voss. Lat. fol. 86) in an unbound state (during restoration); one should remember that Gilissen’s work was only possible because he was not limited to observing bridge marks in the bound volume, but, in the course of his restoration work in Brussels, could spread out the bifolia until they fitted; but the same privilege, in the case of this ninth-century volume, produced nothing. We found only three or four cases of bifolia which might have been attached originally, but they were not in paired positions.¹⁴ I have come to the conclusion that at least until the ninth century skins were normally not divided into bifolia by folding, but by cutting out sections of the desired size in any way they would fit (sometimes one can even see the dorsal stripe running at an angle across the leaf – evidently that skin was damaged and would not accommodate the pattern in a straight position, but only at an angle). This would seem to be confirmed by the fact that bridge marks or other indications of folding have never yet been observed in classical manuscripts, and that in Greek and Oriental manuscripts they appear to be rare, to say the least.

¹³ Manuscripts which do not follow Gregory’s Rule were frequent in early times; but they do occur later: see for instance Harvard MS English 738, early fifteenth-century, discussed by Dennis, ‘Notes’, p. 168 – ‘the construction out of single bifolia cannot be doubted, and this fact, not the lack of concern for Gregory’s Rule, is the point to be emphasized here’, is his very justified comment.

¹⁴ Fols. 9[^]16 (my convention for making clear that two leaves are a bifolium) and fols. 17[^]24 seem to fit; they are the outer bifolia of different quires. The *foot* of 70[^]67 seems to fit to the *head* of 72[^]65. Then, 57[^]64 may fit to 58[^]63; they are the first and *second* bifolium of the quire; 120[^]113 may fit to 116[^]117, and they are the first and *fourth* bifolium; so even if they should actually fit, they still do not suggest a consistent working method. In quire 81–88 there are several possible bridges – and, therefore, not one certain bridge.

The result of these observations would appear to be that folding was not an ancient practice; neither the classical codex nor the Oriental traditions which are its heirs seem to know it. And so Gregory's Rule, which really existed in antiquity, is not a consequence of folding, but of deliberate choice in arranging separate bifolia, for which another reason must be sought. Nor is the preference for quires of even bifolia numbers an effect of folding.

III

Nevertheless, folding exists. If it is not classical, it must be a Western invention. It remains to be investigated how and when it arose. For this, we should try to describe the history of the quire; but that is a subject which I can only sketch here in the most tentative lines.

It is my opinion (only an opinion: I have no proof) that originally the quire was formed out of bifolia, which had been cut to size out of unfolded skins; then the quire was *fixed* with tackets,¹⁵ and writing was done in this fixed quire. That this was a possibility dawned on me when reading Sergew's book on Ethiopian bookmaking (which is – or was, until recently – an almost fossil survivor of antique practices);¹⁶ that it was the common antique, oriental, and also normal Western practice until the twelfth century was an idea that slowly grew, and only afterwards I realized that other people had thought so all along.¹⁷ (That it was the normal practice would not necessarily mean that it was absolutely exclusive.) The date of the twelfth century is the last time when tackets are still commonly found by Michael Gullick.¹⁸

The use of tacketed quires fits with several phenomena of ancient codicology. For instance, the use of quire signatures: a number (or equivalent sign) only on the outside of a quire. Surely this means that the scribe, who made sure the quires would be ordered correctly, felt no anxiety about the bifolia within the quire, because they were safely tacketed; and it was the normal practice from the very beginning until the late twelfth century. One

¹⁵ The most common tacket, although presumably not in the earliest period, is a long sliver of parchment, twisted to look, and to function, almost like a piece of string. It is an extraordinarily simple and efficient device, much used, until the end of the Middle Ages, for books in limp vellum covers.

¹⁶ H. S. Sergew, *Bookmaking in Ethiopia* (Leiden, 1981): '... the scribe cuts the sheets into the size suitable for the manuscript he intends to write. Then he folds the sheets, flesh sides together. Temporarily each quire is connected with a slice of vellum ...' (pp. 23–4).

¹⁷ See especially M. Gullick, 'From Scribe to Binder: Quire Tackets in Twelfth Century European Manuscripts', in *Roger Powell: The Compleat Binder, Liber amicorum*, ed. J. L. Sharpe, *Bibliologia* 14 (Turnhout, 1996), pp. 240–59. Gullick refers to C. R. Gregory, who proposed the idea as early as 1885.

¹⁸ Gullick, 'From Scribe to Binder'; on p. 246 he tentatively traces tacketing back to s. vii/viii.

should also mention the habit of using 'coupled leaves', as I call them: two single leaves taking the place of one bifolium, and generally either the bifolium 2^7 or 3^6 , almost never 4^5 , never 1^8 (thus, the coupled leaves are always sandwiched between two 'real' bifolia). There has never been, to my knowledge, a study of this practice, but it is my impression that it is far from rare until the twelfth century; it occurs in Greek manuscripts, and is really frequent in the oldest Hebrew manuscripts (around the tenth century). It would seem to be an age-old way of discreetly using leftover pieces of parchment that were too small to make a bifolium. And it would seem that it could not work well unless the quires were tacketed. A third relevant practice is 'Old Style' ruling, which is executed in a formed quire, all eight leaves together, or by four from the inside or outside; it would be difficult to do this well if the bifolia were loose, not tacketed. A particularly noteworthy variant is the careful method of some Carolingian scriptoria, where of each quire only one bifolium is pricked, which then serves as the base for ruling the whole quire by four.¹⁹

We have supposed that these quires were formed by grouping bifolia which had been cut out of unfolded skins. If the man who cut the bifolia did this by folding a skin and then cutting it, the result would be absolutely the same, except that pairings could occur. If, however, he left the quadrifolia uncut, formed the quire and tacketed it, then for writing the scribe would have to open the quire as he progressed.

I have been somewhat vague about when in this process I imagined pricking and ruling to have taken place. No doubt there were many methods of arranging the necessary steps. But certainly at least by the eleventh century one finds that pricking and ruling could be done on quadrifolia that had first been folded to make the leaves, then grouped into a quire and pricked, then unfolded and ruled, and finally (presumably) re-folded and re-grouped into the quire, tacketed and written by progressive opening. One can know this because some quadrifolia ruled in this manner have been preserved, having escaped writing and having been used as bifolia in a larger book.²⁰ The result of this technique²¹ would be 'New Style' ruling (also called 'Ruling Before Folding', but it ought really to be called 'Ruling After Unfolding', since the sheets had once already been folded to page size).

This system of work, which undoubtedly knew numerous variants but which in all cases implies writing in a tacketed quire, is relatively clear and appears to have been current until the twelfth century. Two more technical features should be mentioned that go with work in tacketed quires: there is

¹⁹ T. A. M. Bishop, 'The Script of Corbie: A Criterion', in *Varia codicologica* (see note 8), pp. 9–16 (pp. 12–13).

²⁰ J. P. Gumbert, 'Ruling by Rake and Board', in *The Role of the Book in Medieval Culture*, ed. P. Ganz, 2 vols., *Bibliologia* 3 and 4 (Turnhout, 1986), I, 41–54 (pp. 41–2), on The Hague, Mus. Meermannno-Weststr. MS 10 A 3.

²¹ But not necessarily, of course, of this technique alone.

evidence that decoration was (sometimes) executed in the quire,²² and that plummet ruling was (sometimes) done by opening (= facing pages).²³

If writing (and ruling) is done in a tacketed quire, and if that quire contained quadrifolia, then the quire has to be opened as work progresses. This would appear to be the best explanation for the not-so-rare cases where, in early manuscripts, adjoining bifolia are still attached by a narrow bolt in the fold, as mentioned above for the Durham manuscript.²⁴

It is natural for someone accustomed to printed books, as it was natural for Gilissen, to assume that any pairings have to be looked for at the head of the leaves, and that the fold of quadrifolia would also be at the head. But this was not self-evident for medieval scribes. One does from time to time see octavo bifolia (= quarter skins) with the 'marginal texture', which 'ought' to be at the foot of the bifolium (across the fold), at the upper edge instead. And Obbema published a striking case of a bolt joining the feet of two bifolia in a manuscript of around 1000 (Leiden, MS Voss. Lat. oct. 15–VI, a small quire of glosses on Persius etc., part of the set of notebooks left by Adémar de Chabannes of Limoges).²⁵

The thirteenth century is a period of great changes, and of real problems.

On the one hand the technique(s) of the tacketed quire persist; there are cases of ruling by opening,²⁶ and of imperfectly opened manuscripts with bolts.

On the other hand, however, the thirteenth century is the time when people first began to work in *untacketed* quires (or at least the time when that began to be common practice). If the elements of the quire are no longer safely tacketed, they can get into the wrong order – and so they need their own address: the leaf signatures must be invented, first the primitive form that Neil Ker called the 'ad hoc' signatures, and then the well-known a1–a2–b1–b2 system that continued to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond.²⁷

For work on untacketed elements there are two main possibilities: work on

²² Gullick, 'From Scribe to Binder', p. 247, quoting the Lindisfarne Gospels and an Italian manuscript s. xii. (But the fourteenth-century miniature he mentions does not belong to this discussion.)

²³ Gullick, p. 248, already in s. xii².

²⁴ A particularly fine specimen was published by Gilissen in his *Scriptorium* article (see note 4), plate 5 (it is not repeated in *Prolégomènes*).

²⁵ Obbema, 'Een bijzondere manier van schrijven', p. 53, plate 25.

²⁶ Gullick, p. 248.

²⁷ Although there are leaf signatures to be found at earlier moments – see Gullick, p. 249. See P. D. Stirnemann, 'Nouvelles pratiques en matière d'enluminure au temps de Philippe Auguste', in *La France de Philippe Auguste: Le temps des mutations*, Colloques internat. du CNRS 602, ed. R.-H. Bautier (Paris, 1982), pp. 955–80; she discusses the early 'marques d'assemblage', and cites cases (especially p. 960) where they are found only in quires which contained illumination (and, more specifically, more than one illumination), suggesting that those quires were 'démantelés', and therefore needed leaf signatures, and tacitly implying that the undecorated quires were not dismantled – but remained tacketed?

isolated bifolia (probably the most common procedure during the later Middle Ages), and work on quadrifolia. Since these are now untacketed and can be unfolded at any moment, one can now even do the writing on the undivided quadrifolium (imposition). It is not known when this technique was invented, but it has been suggested that it was during the thirteenth century.²⁸ By the fifteenth it probably was not rare.

If the quadrifolium was written in an undivided state (and, thus, not opened by the scribe), it was opened either by the binder or by the first reader. In either case bolts might occur, just as in a quadrifolium progressively opened by a scribe. But if one finds bifolia still attached over the full extent of the fold, as is the case in a number of late medieval manuscripts (in almost all cases it concerns blank leaves, parts of otherwise written and opened quires), then it is most probable that it was a reader who opened what he had to read and left untouched what he did not need to read.²⁹

So, up to the twelfth century scribes worked normally on tacketed quires; from the thirteenth century that technique (or group of techniques) was supplemented, and soon superseded, by two others: work on free bifolia; and work on free quadrifolia (imposition). The later Middle Ages have no essentially new techniques to add, apparently.³⁰

²⁸ Writing on undivided quadrifolia may lie at the root of the *pecia*. See Bozzolo and Ornato, *Pour une histoire*, p. 196, and J.-F. Genest in *La production du livre universitaire au Moyen Âge*, ed. L. J. Bataillon et al. (Paris, 1988), p. 141: 'la *pecia* n'est en définitive qu'une feuille de parchemin pliée en quatre'.

²⁹ J. Irigoin, 'Manuscrit imposé ou copie sur carnets?', *Scriptorium* 46 (1992), 88–91, discusses two Greek manuscripts, on paper, with blank leaves still attached over the top. One (Paris, BN, MS gr. 2265) is twelfth-century, and Irigoin is probably right in suggesting that this is not imposition but work in a progressively opened quire. For the other (Utrecht, UB, MS 6), which is Western of the second quarter of the fifteenth century, he proposes the same solution, but in view of its date and origin I feel imposition is more probable. – Note that even in this context folds at the foot, instead of at the head, occur. I found a manuscript with uncut leaves at the foot in Uppsala, and Monica Hedlund was kind enough to reproduce it: J. P. Gumbert, 'C Catalogue and Codicology – Some Reader's Notes', in *A Catalogue and its Users*, ed. M. Hedlund, Acta Bibl. R. Univ. Upsaliensis 35 (Uppsala, 1995), pp. 57–70 (p. 58, pl. 4).

³⁰ The idea that the Western parchment codex has always been essentially made by folding has become a commonplace among non-Western codicologists: see J. Irigoin, 'Les cahiers des manuscrits grecs', in *Recherches de codicologie comparée*, ed. Ph. Hoffmann et al. (Paris, 1998), pp. 1–19 (p. 1), and F. Déroche, 'L'emploi du parchemin dans les manuscrits islamiques', in *The codicology of Islamic manuscripts*, Proc. 2nd conf. Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, ed. Y. Dutton (London, 1995), pp. 17–57 (p. 29, pointing out that Islamic manuscripts are constructed differently and do not know Gregory's Rule). C. Sirat, 'Pour quelle raison trouve-t-on au Moyen Âge des quinions et des quaternions?', in *Rech. de cod. comparée*, pp. 131–5 (p. 132), speaks about 'even' quires. On the frequency of 'coupled leaves' in Islamic manuscripts, F. Déroche, 'A propos d'une série de manuscrits coraniques anciens', in *Les manuscrits du Moyen-Orient*, Actes Coll. d'Istanbul, ed. F. Déroche (Istanbul, 1989), pp. 101–11 (pp. 107–8).

Reconsidering the Auchinleck Manuscript

RALPH HANNA

This paper builds upon hobby-horses I have been riding for perhaps a decade. First, manuscript study is valuable only insofar as it addresses through material products of human labour the large issues of cultural history. Second, since books are, within certain limits, localizable, they enable the construction of historical narratives. Most particularly, I think here of the need to replace a spent Old Literary History. This, leaving aside other debilities, is far too committed to a myth of the Nation and with it, a national literary tradition. In its stead, we should be studying Middle English Literatures 1100–1413, a project which would include, *inter alia*, examining local or regional literary communities. I have written about one such community, Berkeley, Gloucs., and there are excellent studies of others: Thorlac Turville-Petre on Nottingham and Derbyshire, and Richard Beadle on Norfolk and transmissional communities.¹ I choose to begin a new intervention with what may be the most paradoxical gesture I can muster: to consider the Metropolis and Capital as if it represented just another provincial locale. What you will now read is a draft out of chapter 2 (of six) of a book manuscript tentatively entitled ‘London Literature, c. 1320–1380’.

The limits of my in-progress study are largely established by linguistic data. In 1963, M. L. Samuels outlined the evidence for a transitional variety of fourteenth-century London English (his Type II).² This succeeded an earlier

¹ See Hanna, ‘Sir Thomas Berkeley and his Patronage’, *Speculum* 64 (1989), 878–916; Turville-Petre, ‘Some Medieval English Manuscripts in the North-East Midlands’, in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 125–41; Beadle, ‘Prolegomena to a Literary Geography of Later Medieval Norfolk’, in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. F. Riddy (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 89–108; and ‘Middle English Texts and their Transmission, 1350–1500: Some Geographical Criteria’, in *Speaking in Our Tongues*, ed. M. Laing and K. Williamson (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 69–91.

² See the nuanced restatement of Samuels’ earlier study in *Linguistic Evolution with Special Reference to English* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 165–70. The lower limits of Type II can easily be ascertained from the paucity of specifically Type II forms in texts from the mid-1380s (notably *Usk* and the guild returns) printed by R. W. Chambers and M. Daunt in *A Book of London English, 1384–1425* (Oxford, 1931). For comparative purposes, recall the conventional datings of Chaucer’s ‘Parliament of Fowls’ and *Troilus and Criseyde*, 1381/2 and 1386, respectively.

dialect, known from the 'proclamation of 1258' and was, in its turn, pretty much superseded by the mid-1380s, with the arrival of Type III, the language of Geoffrey Chaucer. Thus, in London, henceforth the centre of a quickly canonical 'Middle English literature', a major linguistic shift occurred almost simultaneously with a shift in literary taste – at a moment in which a literature apparently local in its nature was transformed into a model for a developing national culture. Samuels's study usefully identified eight codices communicating works in Type II London (the list can be slightly extended) and thus established a corpus indicative of London literary production before Chaucer.

Central to my investigation of this culture will be attention to the one early London English book one cannot escape (although I had long hoped I would), the Auchinleck Manuscript, Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates' 19.2.1. While it is far from being the single focus of my argument – Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2498 seems to me of inherently greater cultural interest and importance – it will occupy a fair amount of my attention, as it has that of a great many scholars ever since Eugen Kölbing intruded it upon critical attention in 1884.³

The main reason for avoiding Auchinleck is that it's big and messy. The extant manuscript is numbered to 334 folios and includes forty-four text items. But what remains, large as it is, is only wreckage: there's evidence for more than eighty lost leaves and fifteen to twenty additional texts. There's consensus, based on the work of Alan Bliss, Ian Cunningham and Pamela Robinson,⁴ that the book was not produced as a piece, but in twelve definable booklets, independent units, many of them substantial. Thus, there is no necessary connection between the bound order of the book we have – this was imposed on the booklets at the end of the procedure – and the various stages of its production.

The whole was produced by an extensive team. In the conventional account, there were six scribes. But Robinson, reporting the views of Malcolm Parkes, persuasively indicates that one ten-leaf booklet always assigned to a 'scribe 6' was in fact copied by 'scribe 1';⁵ this individual wrote nearly three-

³ See 'Vier Romanzen-Handschriften', *Englische Studien* 7 (1884), 177–201. For Pepys 2498, see the description in Rosamond McKitterick and Richard Beadle, *Catalogue of the Pepys Library at Magdalene College Cambridge, Vol. V: Manuscripts, Part i: Medieval* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 86–8; the Pepys scribe was certainly a professional, responsible for two other surviving books: London, British Library, MS Harley 874; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud misc. 622.

⁴ See, respectively, 'Notes on the Auchinleck Manuscript', *Speculum* 26 (1951), 652–8; the introduction to the facsimile, *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, by D. Pearsall and I. C. Cunningham (London, 1977), esp. the collation diagram at pp. xii–xiii and the accurate, universally accepted division into booklets at p. ix; and 'Some Aspects of the Transmission of English Verse Texts in Late Mediaeval Manuscripts' (unpublished B.Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1972), pp. 120–38.

⁵ Robinson, pp. 128–31.

quarters of the surviving book (and given fragmentary materials surrounding extensive lost texts, an even greater percentage of the whole). In addition, production required at least two paraphers and a painter – whose efforts have been generally ignored and unduly trashed. First of all, it's striking that the book has any illumination at all (Chaucer and Langland manuscripts don't, as a rule); second, how much there is of it – five miniatures survive, thirteen more have been cut out (leaving holes in the leaves, now patched) and eighteen leaves with text openings, places where one might have expected a painting, have been excised.⁶

Study of Auchinleck has generally sought to accommodate the book to some kind of familiar production pattern. Laura Hibbard Loomis (whose extensive work on the book has been read as if it were a *Sun* column – for the flashy bits and page 3) saw clearly the cooperative nature of the enterprise. For her, this could only mean that the book emerged from a laicized operation modelled on a monastic scriptorium (a view followed in Judith Crounse Mordkoff's 1981 University of Connecticut thesis).⁷ On the other hand, Derek Pearsall with Cunningham and implicitly Robinson look to later models, forms of fifteenth-century book-production in which shared scribal work enables production economies. Dividing copy among a group of individuals allows the relatively prompt production of an extensive volume.⁸

I think the evidence of the manuscript is resistant to either view. First, as I've implied, it's difficult to see Auchinleck as anything other than scribe 1's book. Not only did he copy more than four times as much as all his colleagues combined, but, as Timothy Shonk, in the finest single study of the manuscript, insists, he provided every catchword at a booklet boundary, as well as every surviving text title but one and all the numeration assigned to texts.⁹ Further, quite unusually for a book so large, every other scribe, where texts allowed it, set out to imitate his ruling system and his double column, forty-four lines to the column format.

⁶ For precise details, see Cunningham in the facsimile, p. xv.

⁷ Loomis's series of Auchinleck studies are virtually all gathered in *Adventures in the Middle Ages: A Memorial Collection of Essays and Studies* (New York, 1962). See especially pp. 150–87, reprinting 'The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330–1340', originally published in *PMLA* 57 (1942), 595–627. Mordkoff's Ph.D. thesis, 'The Making of the Auchinleck Manuscript: The Scribes at Work', is filled with meticulous observed detail; cf. the one published bit from it, Cunningham and Mordkoff, 'New Light on the Signatures in the Auchinleck Manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 19.2.1)', *Scriptorium* 36 (1982), 280–92.

⁸ See Pearsall in the facsimile, pp. viii–ix, and note his comment that the scribes did not follow what 'might seem the swiftest production procedure: maybe the organisation was not very sophisticated' (p. ix).

⁹ T. A. Shonk, 'A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century', *Speculum* 60 (1985), 71–91, considerably more useful than Shonk's unpublished 1981 University of Tennessee dissertation.

Moreover, the scribal stints are conducive to viewing Auchinleck in this way. With the exception of the very interesting scribe 3, who originally copied the complete booklet 3, forty-three folios (three at the end left blank, eight now lost), the subsidiary scribes copied only full single texts in isolated sections of the manuscript. Particularly when the extent of scribe 1's copying is taken into account, the volume looks very much like a normal English book, if a very large one. It is, in fact, a single practitioner volume with ad lib piecework – like Ringo, scribe 1 called in his friends when the going got tough. The booklets then are not, as in fifteenth-century work, simultaneous in origin, a production economy, but largely the sequential efforts of an individual.

Moreover, booklet structure supports such a view. As I haven't had to say, Auchinleck is a great collection of romances, long narrative poems. Not altogether predictably, however, the booklet division reflects these separate big-ticket items. They most usually stand at the head of the runs of quires constituting individual booklets. (Booklet 1 is miscellaneous but also survives only from what's at best its mid second quire on; in scribe 3's Booklet 3, the big items are buried.) And concomitantly, the booklets conclude with fairly blatant filler, a certain amount of tailoring, most of it by scribe 1 again; this effort at finishing the book, making it look like a unit, does not succeed in producing a thoroughly continuous manuscript.¹⁰

Such features lead me to speculate a little about the situation of production. At this date, the book must have been 'bespoke', a client's special order. The separable production may suggest that this was an order that, in some sense, got out of hand, that scribe 1 was provided with a succession of requested items ('Give me a *Beves*', 'This week I was thinking about *Richard Coeur de Leon*') from someone perhaps imperious but certainly wealthy and enthusiastic. Hence the topheavy booklets: scribe 1 got started on the major texts his client requested. A limited number of these orders he may have had to fulfill simultaneously and as exemplars for copying came available, and in those situations he may simply have had to rely upon piecework contributions from colleagues. For (hypothetical) example, he might have acquired on short-term loan an exemplar for *Beves of Hampton* (copied by scribe 5 into the first third of what would, with scribe 1's additions and finishing, eventually become Booklet 5) at a moment when his client was clamouring for a look at *Alisaunder*, now the very fragmentary Booklet 8 but in any event at least a forty-folio stint (? two weeks' work) in its own right. As this narrative implies, I would not preclude the possibility that, perhaps even on multiple occasions at various stages of production, portions of the book may have passed from scribe 1, not just to the illuminator (which we would expect), but to the client for his or her use – and some disturbances in the system of numbering texts may imply that the scribe performed this task at a time when portions of the volume were unavailable to him.

¹⁰ Cf. such a sloppy booklet juncture as that at fols. 69v–70.

In the light of this opinion, I want to 'familiarize' the book. I hope to offer a little evidence to suggest that Auchinleck is not quite such an outré or overwhelming proceeding as has customarily been assumed. Certainly, in the light of the 'Liber Horn' and associated books Neil Ker identified as produced for the Guildhall 1311 × 1324 or so, 'big book' production (although not in the vernacular) was scarcely foreign to the London book trade.¹¹

Mentioning these books suggests an important context for London work, both early and later, in need of much more examination, the community of legal book-producers. As I've already noted, the closest thing Auchinleck scribe 1 has to a legitimate collaborator is scribe 3. His script, which Bliss identified as showing 'chancery training', implies, in Parkes's reformulation, that he was, at the least, more accustomed to producing formal (or 'engrossed') copies of legal documents than literary texts.¹² The closest geographical analogue to scribe 3's language the Middle English linguistic atlas has turned up is that of Hoccleve's autographs, i.e., work from a trained legal scribe who was also a poet.¹³ Proximity might suggest placing scribe 3, like Hoccleve, in some government office; but in any case, scribal involvement in multiple writing situations is a long-lived London business – one worth keeping in mind in the case of such later legal copyists as William Langland, Thomas Usk, Geoffrey Chaucer, Richard Frampton and John Carpenter (common clerk or secretary to the City, compiler of the 'Liber albus', and perhaps the person otherwise known as 'the scribe of Huntington HM 114').¹⁴

¹¹ 'Liber Custumarum, and other Manuscripts formerly at the Guildhall', in Ker, *Books, Collectors and Libraries: Studies in the Medieval Heritage*, ed. A. G. Watson (London, 1985), pp. 134–42. For a description of the portion of the book still at the Guildhall, see N. R. Ker (volume 4 with A. J. Piper), *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries*, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1969–92), I, 20–2 (hereafter MMBL).

¹² See Bliss, p. 653; and Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands* (Oxford, 1969), p. xvii and n. 1. More recently, in conversation, Parkes has generously offered the opinion that the hand displays an angularity in letter formation and a jabbing duct which one would associate with someone used to writing on wax tablets, rather than membrane; such habits might suggest a person accustomed to daily household writing tasks, such as taking dictation or writing memoranda.

¹³ I refer, of course, to *A Linguistic Atlas of Later Mediaeval English*, ed. A. McIntosh et al., 4 vols. (Aberdeen, 1986) (hereafter LALME). There Hoccleve is designated by LP 6420 (1:92), Auchinleck scribe 3 by LP 6500 (1:88). The main scribe, LP 6510, is located just on the London/Middlesex border. See further n. 32 below.

¹⁴ For Frampton, see Doyle and Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the Canterbury Tales and the Confessio Amantis in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 163–203, at p. 192 (esp. n. 65, and p. 196 n. 82, with reference to San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 19920). I am grateful to Ian Doyle for continuing updates over several years concerning his discovery of the HM 114 hand in London legal records, principally in the 'Liber albus' of 1419. As he points out to me, H. T. Riley suggested, on grounds certainly erroneous, that the

Moreover, legal texts provide the best placement of the Auchinleck illuminator. Lynda Dennison's recent researches allow far narrower specifications than heretofore about the nature and constitution of what is usually called 'the Queen Mary Psalter workshop'. Dennison shows that the Auchinleck painter is closely related to a probably peripatetic atelier, in origin East Anglian but resident in London for a substantial part of the 1320s. Some of the same hands provided decoration both in Auchinleck and in those contemporary 'big books' I've mentioned, the extensive legal volume(s) 'Liber custumarum', only part of which is still at the Guildhall, the remainder dispersed in British Library, MS Cotton Claudius D.ii and Oxford, Oriel College, MS 46. (While the East Anglian limners were engaged in this process, c. 1321–25, the actual hands of the Queen Mary Psalter were illuminating what would eventually be extended into an early London English book, the *Somme le roi*, which was originally the sole text in Cambridge, St John's College, MS S.30.)¹⁵

And contemporary legal manuscripts often involve suggestive and surprising analogues to Auchinleck. Surprising because the legal books are presenting, not one-off, free-choice collections of recent romances, but fixed canons, sequences of legal codes. With great tentativeness, I'd suggest some analogues to Auchinleck from one legal book, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 70, produced for Andrew Horn, chamberlain of the City, around 1310. This volume, called *de veteribus legibus Anglie* and containing codes from Ine to Henry III, Horn willed to 'the chamber of the Guildhall' in 1328.¹⁶

The book, ninety-eight folios, is in the main the work of a single scribe, who also copied another book for Horn, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 258, fols. 1–52 (the unique copy of the *Speculum iusticiariorum*).¹⁷ But within two quires (the fifth and sixth), pages 75–105, this writer gave over *most* (not the last two pages or so) of a single text, the laws of Henry II, to

hand was Carpenter's; see *Munimenta Gildhallae Londoniensis: Liber albus . . .*, Rolls Series 12, i (1859), p. xxii n. 2; and further, W. Kellaway, 'John Carpenter's Liber Albus', *Guildhall Studies* 3 (1978), 67–84, both references that I owe to Doyle's customary generosity.

¹⁵ See L. Dennison, "'Liber Horn'", "Liber Custumarum" and Other Manuscripts of the Queen Mary Psalter Workshops', in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in London*, ed. L. Grant, British Archaeological Association 10 (1990), 118–34; and 'An Illuminator of the Queen Mary Psalter Group: The Ancient 6 Master', *The Antiquaries Journal* 66 (1986), 287–314.

¹⁶ Described by M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1909–12), I, 148–49. For Horn's will, see, most conveniently, S. H. Cavanaugh, 'A Study of Books Privately Owned in England, 1300–1450' (unpublished University of Pennsylvania thesis, 1980), pp. 440–2.

¹⁷ The identification is also made in Jeremy Catto's fine study, 'Andrew Horn: Law and History in Fourteenth-Century England', in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern*, ed. R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford, 1981), pp. 367–91.

another scribe. The exchange, like those in Auchinleck, is textbound, not geared to a production unit; scribe 2 writes only within the two quires, and scribe 1's texts run continuously across quire boundaries before and after his stint. While scribe 2 was engaged in this task, scribe 1 obviously was up to something else, not necessarily a labour that appears in this manuscript.

Moreover, the book, like Auchinleck, was certainly being stitched together in process. The quire where scribe 2 begins copying is a twelve, as are all those in the remainder (the final quire is a three-leaf add-on), but this is preceded by four units, none a twelve, indeed all unique in the number of leaves each contains, and divided among at least two booklets. And decisions about contents and presentation were being made ad hoc, during production. Typically, the codes of individual monarchs, written in long lines, are preceded, within the text sequence, by double-column tables of contents; but that for William the Bastard's confirmation of the laws of the Confessor was added later on the blank, booklet-ending page 52 – and at a time, as a note there indicates, when the subsequent quire to which the table referred was not to hand. One more similar example (of several): at the end, scribe 1 copied a table for the voluminous legislation of Edward I, but Horn himself has added a note in essence cancelling the text, saying that it is in another book, and that he intends to have it copied into a different *magnum codicem* of items useful to his contemporaries, i.e., the current 'Liber Horn', fols. 36ff (also in his will, as 'De statutis Anglie').¹⁸ One might suggest that Auchinleck monumentalizes such a fits and starts mode of production. Horn's note at least implies the possible argument that the romance codex ultimately was a fortuitous conjunction of materials originally intended for dispersed use.

But whatever the legal analogues, and to an extent no one has recognized, there is an impressive number of vernacular English models for a book like Auchinleck. Moreover, these show an extraordinary geographical dispersal, suggesting that books like them may have been generally available models in a variety of locales. Including some contemporary or slightly later examples (the archetypes of these productions would have been of an age to be available to scribe 1), these include:

1. London, Dulwich College, MS 22, fols. 81v–85v, 'La Estorie del Euangelie' (s. xiii² or ex., extreme south Lincs.), in a much more formal script than the following items¹⁹

2. The burned London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius D.iii, fols. 6–8, with 'Floris and Blancheflour'; the leaves probably come from the same book as fols. 1–5, Anglo-Norman verse biblical history (s. xiii ex.; northern Gloucs., LALME LP 7120)

¹⁸ Relevant portions of the note are cited by Catto, p. 373 n. 2. For a description of the 'Liber Horn', see Ker, *MMBL*, I, 27–34.

¹⁹ The text appears on a quire separate in origin from the rest of the book, probably associated with its binding; see Ker, *MMBL*, I, 45.

3. Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.iv.27, part 2, with 'Floris', 'King Horn', and 'The Assumption of Our Lady' (s. xiii/xiv; west Berks., LALME LP 6800)²⁰

4. British Library, MS Additional 14408, fols. 74–81 and the binding of Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS 572, 'Guy of Warwick' (s. xiv^{1/4}; northern Middle English)²¹

5. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 108, fols. 204–32, with 'Horn', 'Havelok' etc. (s. xiv in.; west Norfolk)²²

6. Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.i.1, immense and mostly Anglo-Norman, but fols. 122–34v the Northern Passion (s. xiv in.; Hiberno-English)²³

7. The contemporary London, British Library, MS Harley 2253, 'Horn' with other miscellaneous contents (c. 1340; Ludlow, Herefs.)²⁴

8. Cambridge, University Library, MS Additional 4407, item 19: fragments of 'Havelok' with other poems (s. xiv med.; west Norfolk)²⁵

All of these books share textual presentations and ones foreign to the general run of smaller thirteenth-century vernacular manuscripts. They are folio-sized volumes in double-column format, generally of forty lines or more to the column. They have offset capitals at the head of each line, often in a separately ruled column. And the capitals, although provided in text ink, are red-slashed. All of these features recur in Auchinleck, and wherever they occur, they are imitative: this textual presentation developed very early on in Anglo-Norman books and has simply been carried over into English. In essence, format follows content: the romances for which Auchinleck is best known are, after all, translations from Anglo-Norman sources. And one should note the confluence of English and Anglo-Norman in Vitellius, Gg.i.1, Harley 2253, and Dulwich; the first in fact included a now completely destroyed Norman *Amis et Amiloun*, perhaps from the same manuscript as the materials I have already noted.²⁶

²⁰ Described and fol. 1 reproduced in the facsimile of part 1, *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. M. B. Parkes and R. Beadle, 3 vols. (Norman, OK, 1979–80), III, 68–9.

²¹ See M. Mills and D. Huws, *Fragments of an Early Fourteenth-Century Guy of Warwick*, Medium Aevum Monographs n.s. 4 (Oxford, 1974), with reproductions.

²² Described in M. Görlach, *The Textual Tradition of the South English Legendary* (Leeds, 1974), pp. 88–90; and *Havelok*, ed. G. V. Smithers (Oxford, 1987), pp. xi–xiv (facsimile of fol. 213 opposite p. 50).

²³ Described by P. Meyer, 'Les manuscrits français de Cambridge: II, Bibliothèque de l'Université', *Romania* 15 (1886), 236–357, at 295.

²⁴ Available in the full facsimile, *Facsimile of British Museum MS Harley 2253*, ed. N. R. Ker, EETS 255 (1965), with discussion (pp. xx–xxi) of and two plates from the Royal MS to which I refer below; for a description of it, see *Fouke le Fitz Waryn*, ed. E. J. Hathaway et al., ANTS 26–28 (1975), pp. xxxvii–liii. Carter Revard has written on several occasions about the scribe and his milieu, e.g., *Notes and Queries* 224 (1979), 199–202; 226 (1981), 199–200; and 227 (1982), 62–3.

²⁵ See the description in *Havelok*, ed. Smithers, pp. xiv–xvi.

²⁶ For the contents of the intact pre-1731 volume, certainly one of those composite grab-bags Sir Robert Cotton was fond of having bound together, see T. Smith,

Because often fragmentary, these 'models' are rather difficult to interrogate. But to give you some idea of the kinds of books apt to be at issue, consider the most exiguous of these survivals, the Cambridge Additional fragments. These four rather tatty bits, the largest 123 mm × 100 mm, only make sense as remains from a manuscript in double columns. Moreover, given the nature and position of the surviving text, these columns must have included sixty-six lines each, and the leaf must have been at least 330 mm high. This is a significantly larger page, with much more textual content, than one finds in Auchinleck.²⁷ And a book conceived on this scale will not have been a thin one either; the leaves include, not just 'Havelok', but bits of three other poems, and the contents appear to have been miscellaneous (thus potentially expansive), on the order of Harley 2253.

I emphasize page layout as an inherited feature, because the Auchinleck booklet sequence should indicate the transitionality of all manuscript procedures, that handwritten books are always involved in complex mediations, not simply with their local conditions of production, but also with their pasts, with predecessor volumes. In this regard, I consider one overlooked edge of Auchinleck texts – most studies emphasize innovation and the very large number of previously unrecorded romances – a group of items inherited.

Here five texts are of particular interest:²⁸

in Booklet 1 (ends fol. 38):

item 4 'St. Margaret' (IMEV 203, fols. 16rb–21ra)

item 8 'The Harrowing of Hell' (IMEV 185, fols. 35rb–37rb or va)

in Booklet 5 (ends, after three fillers, fol. 260):

item 29 'How our lady's Psalter was first found' (IMEV 1840, fols. 259rb–60vb)

in Booklet 8 (ends with three extant fillers, fol. 280; three more items appeared on five leaves, now lost, between items 34 and 35):

item 34 'The Thrush and the Nightingale' (IMEV 3222, fol. 279vab, atelous)

item 35 'Sayings of St. Bernard' (IMEV 2865/3310, fol. 280ra, ? acephalic)²⁹

The first booklet is quite miscellaneous and generally comprised of far briefer texts than appear elsewhere in Auchinleck. But elsewhere these texts are literally 'edgy': they are what scribe 1 accessioned to fill blank folios left after he'd copied his large texts into the heads of the booklets.

The set of five to which I draw attention does not represent London work

Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Cottonian Library 1696, ed. C. G. C. Tite (Cambridge, 1984), p. 90.

²⁷ As is also the case with MS Laud Misc. 622, by the scribe of Pepys 2498 and related to Auchinleck in providing 'Alisaunder'.

²⁸ For the contents of Auchinleck, see the elaborate table in the facsimile, pp. xix–xxiv. T. Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290–1340* (Oxford, 1996), p. 114, has previously noticed these odd western bits.

²⁹ On the status of this text, see J. E. Cross, 'The Sayings of St. Bernard and Ubi Sount Qui Ante Nos Fuerunt', *Review of English Studies* n.s. 9 (1958), 1–7.

at all and is far from contemporary. These are not just fillers but relicts, remains from a regional literary culture of the late thirteenth century, communicated by trilingual miscellanies copied far from London. Four of the texts derive from Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86, a family miscellany associable with individuals from Oswaldslo Hundred, south Worcs., s. xiii^{4/4}. And the fifth, item 4, redacts a text in its original form a close congener of Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.14.39, inferentially a communal book of *praedicabilia* from the Worcester Franciscans, s. xiii^{3/4}. Whatever may be innovative about Auchinleck, scribe 1 also knew, and set at least marginal value upon, works which may have been decidedly antique by the time he copied them.³⁰

With these texts, I would join a more substantial one, one of those booklet-beginning large texts I have mentioned, the 'Short Metrical Chronicle'. The Auchinleck text is substantially longer than any other copy, at least in part because of added London materials. And it has usually been considered as perhaps the oldest, its only rival in this regard the version in British Library, MS Royal 12 C.xii, the 'other book' by the Ludlow scribe of Harley 2253. Certainly, the appearance of the work in that codex suggests another importation from a western literary community.

Such an impression may be strengthened if one considers a heretofore unexamined fragment from the whole, fol. 14 of London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.xi (a tipped-in strip, inserted opposite relevant materials in the oldest copy of Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*). Here the Early English Text Society editor of the 'Chronicle' served his readers badly; in his view, the fragment was written in the first half of the fourteenth century. In fact, it is considerably older, in a hand of about 1280 and with distinctive dialectal forms one would associate with northern Gloucester or southern Worcestershire. It not only testifies to another text imported from abroad and from a much different, perhaps even antique, literary environment; it also suggests that the original 'Chronicle' may only have extended to Henry III, rather than the supplemented forms elsewhere recorded (Auchinleck's most extensively so, updated after 1327).³¹

³⁰ For the first of these books, see *Facsimile of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 86*, ed. J. Tschann and M. B. Parkes, EETS s.s. 16 (1996), fols. 119–120v, 130–132, 136v–138, and 125v–127, respectively. If one ignores *Index of Middle English Verse* 1840, there are four English texts between the last two items cited above, from which the three now lost items in Auchinleck might have been derived; see the facsimile, p. xxvi (contents items 45, 46, 48 and 49). For the Trinity MS and its 'St. Margaret', see K. Reichl, *Religiöse Dichtung im englischen Hochmittelalter: Untersuchung und Edition der Handschrift B.14.39 des Trinity College in Cambridge* (Munich, 1973), pp. 163–288 (esp. 252).

³¹ See *An Anonymous Short Metrical Chronicle*, ed. E. Zettl, EETS 196 (1935), pp. xxviii–xxxi. Distinctive forms in the Caligula fragment would include buþ/beþ ARE, your FOUR and bivel BEFELL, ssolde SHOULD, sulf SELF, and 3wan WHEN; for their distribution, see, respectively, *LALME*, I, 337 (dot map 129), I, 549 (dot map 1180; cf.

This ancestry of Auchinleck texts interfaces interestingly with some subsidiary information about the scribes. First, scribe 2, who contributed two booklet-opening texts, 'Speculum Guy of Warwick' (booklet 2) and 'The Simonie' (booklet 12), came from roughly the same area as the works I have been discussing; the linguistic atlas would place his language very near the point where Gloucestershire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire meet. And the suppositious 'scribe 6', responsible for 'Otuel', the sole text in booklet 7 as it survives, writes the language of extreme south central Worcestershire.³² (Since this hand is simply scribe 1, one must postulate that he here, uniquely, failed to translate the forms of an alien text into his normal Type II London.) In fact, connections between these London book producers and the south-west Midlands may have been very direct indeed – and foreshadow what seem to have been continuing Worcester links in the London booktrade of c. 1400 and later, particularly among scribes responsible for copies of *Piers Plowman C*.³³

This raises a fundamental methodological conundrum, with which I close. From the Digby 86 relicts and the 'Short Metrical Chronicle', one might query the conception of 'regional literary community'. The problem emerges in equally pressing ways with some Auchinleck romance texts. Maldwyn Mills has usefully qualified a few of Loomis's still far from adequately investigated findings; he suggests that some groups of Auchinleck romances may have been imported from provincial centres (York in the case of 'Horn Child').

At the other extreme, G. V. Smithers asserted that some very substantial Auchinleck poems ('Alisaunder', 'Seven Sages', 'Richard Coeur de Lion', 'Arthur and Merlin') are of common authorship, and common London authorship.³⁴ And the activity of some later London scribes and authors

dot maps 363, 413, 419), I, 341 (dot map 147), II, 334, and II, 190 (one example of 3w, several of hw-spellings). Auchinleck's added verse paragraph referring to Edward III as king (Zettl's lines A 2343–52), necessarily written after 1327, offers the best evidence for dating the production of, at least, this part of the book. Turville-Petre, p. 110, implicitly argues for the period 1329 × 1337.

³² These are LALME's LP 6940 and 7820, respectively; see I, 88. More predictably, scribe 5, responsible for 'Reinbrun' at the end of booklet 4 and 'Beves of Hampton' at the head of booklet 5, came from Essex (LP 6350, toward the extreme east of the current metropolitan area).

³³ The three scribes in question are responsible for a closely related group of copies. Most prominent is the prolific Doyle-Parkes scribe D, who copied, *inter alia*, 'the Ilchester MS', University of London Library, MSS.L. V.88; see their discussion, pp. 174–82, 192–6, 206–8. With him may be joined the scribes responsible for San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 143, and 'the Holloway fragment', now in the collection of Martin Schøyen, Oslo, both of whom write scripts reminiscent of Doyle-Parkes scribe B and of the scribe of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.15.17. I am grateful to Malcolm Parkes for spending an hour playing with the four hands with me.

³⁴ *Horn Childe and Maiden Rinnhild*, ed. M. Mills, MET 20 (1988), pp. 63ff (see further Turville-Petre, pp. 114, 139 n. 11); and *Kyng Alisaunder II*, ed. Smithers, EETS 237 (1957), p. 41. Smithers' promised proof of common authorship has never appeared, but presumably would rely on identity of linguistic forms as described in EETS 237.

may suggest the presence of core literary concerns not entirely obliterated by Chaucerian hegemony. For example, Richard Frampton's Cambridge, University Library MS Mm.v.14 contains 'modern', non-London versions of two texts which occur in English in early London books: the Latin *Historia de proeliis Alexandri magni*, the source of *Alisaunder* (in Laud misc. 622, originally also in Auchinleck); and the alliterative *Siege of Jerusalem*, analogous to the rhymed *Titus and Vespasian*, which also occurs in the Laud manuscript. Similar to Frampton's replacing earlier London work with analogous but imported texts c. 1410, one might note the activity of Henry Lovelich, skinner c. 1420. He produced for his fellow skinner Harry Barton (a former mayor) an 'updated' version of 'Arthur and Merlin', perhaps directly modelled on Auchinleck.

May one then properly distinguish transmissional from authorial communities? Should one, in considering 'London literature', draw a line between 'literature read in London' and 'literature composed in London'? Or is a community defined by some oscillation between work local and familiar, possibly even personalized, and that (to use London terms) non-citizenly and alien? And how does one imagine those responses and their interplay? Questions like these seem to me the ones Middle English scholars ought to be considering. Obviously enough, only manuscript study will carry such projects forward.

Professional Readers of Langland at Home and Abroad: New Directions in the Political and Bureaucratic Codicology of *Piers Plowman*

KATHRYN KERBY-FULTON

The professional readers of *Piers Plowman* are a much maligned group.¹ But I would like to suggest how further study of their habits and supposed atrocities can help us get closer to (in this case) the political circles in which Langland's poem actually travelled – circles a little different from the ones we have lavished much of our scholarship upon so far. 'Professional readers', as I define them here, are those whose job it was to make decisions on behalf of the medieval reader about how the text should go down on the page – *conscious* decisions, that is, about editing, annotating, correcting, rubricating, or illustrating a text.² They are usually and traditionally denigrated by textual scholars for doing exactly what they were supposed to be doing in the production of books: 'preparing' (our misleadingly neutral word) the text for their immediate readers, whether specific bookshop

Acknowledgements. I would like to thank the following people: for advice and expertise on government hands, inscriptions or Exchequer images, Carl Grindley, DeLloyd Guth, Josephine Matthews (and other staff of the Public Record Office at Kew); for helpful observations on the Douce illustrations in relation to the Dublin fragment, Maidie Hilmo, Malcolm Parkes and Martha Driver; for editorial help: Mary Jo Arn, and Derek Pearsall, to whom thanks are also due for a splendid and stimulating conference.

¹ Perhaps most famously and spiritedly by George Kane; see his 'The Text', in J. A. Alford, *A Companion to Piers Plowman* (Berkeley, 1988), pp. 175–200, especially 182 and 187. For an excellent recent discussion of textual matters, see R. Hanna, 'MS Bodley 851 and the Dissemination of *Piers Plowman*', and 'On the Versions of *Piers Plowman*', in his *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and their Texts* (Stanford, 1996), pp. 194–202, and pp. 203–46.

² K. Kerby-Fulton and D. Despres, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: The Politics of Book Production in the Douce Piers Plowman* (Minneapolis, 1999); on distinguishing them from private readers, see chapter 3, and appendix 2; and see also T. Schaap, 'From Professional to Private Readership: A Discussion and Transcription of the Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Marginalia in *Piers Plowman* C-Text, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 102', in *The Medieval Reader*, special issue of *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, vol. 1 (2000), forthcoming.

patrons, or fellow monastics in a religious house, or the more anonymous 'implied reader' of the book prepared 'on spec'. Such 'preparation', we know, might include any number of interventionist or creative activities, such as translating the original dialect, tinkering with the alliteration, suppressing or embellishing controversial content, imposing an unauthorized set of rubrics, or illustrating an episode contrary to what the text actually says – or said. The term 'professional reader', as used here, then, refers to those who *knowingly* controlled what others would read, and excludes therefore scribes and other book craftsmen who were for the most part mechanically copying or carrying out the orders of their supervisors (where, that is, the 'supervisor' is not merely a comforting myth of modern scholarship).³ But real professional readers wielded a great deal of power; they could not only silently affect every aspect of textual reception, but they could do so with a consistency and vision that created not only new readings but, in effect, a new text (of which the most striking example in Langland scholarship is likely the Z text). The range of their intervention could be staggering, and for modern scholars, extremely valuable, as important evidence of regionalism and ideological pluralism in medieval culture.

It is the pluralism that is too often missed. The best known readers of *Piers Plowman* are still, for modern scholars, the ideologically extreme ones, such as John Ball and his coterie of rebel readers, or the clutch of *Plowman* tradition authors, some of whom can be associated with Lollard thought.⁴ As Anne Hudson has observed, *Piers* was a poem that historical events made more radical as time went on.⁵ But, it has been argued, this (potential for) radicalism has left little trace in the extant manuscripts. In a recent article, for instance, John Bowers expressed frustration that he could find only one manuscript, London, Society of Antiquaries, MS 687, to justify any kind of New Historicist espionage into Langland's subversiveness.⁶ Society of Antiquaries MS 687 certainly has some Lollard content, but not an impressive amount – not enough to turn evidence on the poem as anything like a burnable book. More promising as indicators of radical or 'suspect' thought – although not always Wycliffite, sometimes seditious – is some of the minor Latin material found in conjunction with *Piers*, material not much studied as

³ See K. Kerby-Fulton, "'Langland in his Working Clothes?'" Scribe D, Loose Revision Material and the Nature of Scribal Intervention', forthcoming in *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions. Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, ed. A. J. Minnis.

⁴ S. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, 1994); A. Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', in Alford, *Companion*, pp. 251–66.

⁵ Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford, 1988), p. 408.

⁶ J. M. Bowers, 'Piers Plowman and the Police: Notes Toward a History of the Wycliffite Langland', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 6 (1992), 1–50, especially 28. It might be added that the list of ecclesiastical censures at the end of the manuscript has some strange omissions.

yet, some of it even unedited.⁷ But even so, the evidence is hardly as extensive as we might expect, if, that is, our definition of radicalism is limited – as it has been for many recently – to instances of Lollardy or rebellion. But *Piers* manuscripts were nonetheless read and copied by some who were urgently concerned with issues of reform, and related political policy, and for this there is plenty of manuscript evidence, although much of it remains unstudied in any detail.⁸

I am referring here to evidence left us by civil servants and lawyers, an audience we are still far too inclined to see as ‘the political enemy’ of the ‘real’ audience of Langland’s socially compassionate poem (one thinks of ‘The Song of the Husbandman’s outcry against how Exchequer documents sealed with ‘*þe grene wax vs greueþ*’ with oppressive taxation, or more egregiously, the alleged fury of John Ball’s rebels against ‘*tout ceuz de chauncellerie et del eschequer et toutz qe savoient brief ou lettre escrire*’).⁹ But Langland had readers, of course, inside offices as well as outside them (or, better, pretending to be outside them). This essay will look at some of the manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* with an eye to the political associations they reveal, particularly among civil servants, legal scribes, colonial administrators and politicians, including connections to a group of high profile Ricardian books, some of which were owned by or otherwise featured the Appellants. What exactly we can make of some of these links it is too soon to say, because they are as yet fragmentary, but this is a ‘new direction’ well worth exploring, since many of the older ones (links with the Rising, Lollardy, and poems of ‘political protest’) have, for the moment at least, yielded much of what they are going to yield – and have in some cases been over-racked to give up their secrets. The exigencies of space allow for no more than a few instances of each type of connection, but I hope that enough may be said to give a sense of possibilities for research in the political and bureaucratic codicology of the poem.

The background

In what must by now be the most cited article in our field, Doyle and Parkes identified the work of five scribes on the Trinity Gower, and

⁷ See the allusions to *Piers* in a Latin pro-Wycliffite poem on the Blackfriars’ Council of 1382 (‘*Heu quanta desolacio*’), ed. T. Wright, *Political Poems* (London, 1859–61), vol. I, pp. 253–63, or the elsewhere suppressed verses hostile to Henry IV in the poem on the execution of Scrope in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 851 (A. G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 294).

⁸ See A. Middleton, ‘The Audience and Public of “*Piers Plowman*”’, in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background*, ed. D. Lawton (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 103–23.

⁹ *Alliterative Poetry of the Middle Ages*, ed. T. Turville-Petre (Washington, 1989), p. 19, line 55; *The Anonimale Chronicle*, cited Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, p. 50 n. 115.

identified their hands in other metropolitan productions, including Scribe D's immense corpus (he copied the Ilchester *Piers*, two texts of the *Canterbury Tales*, and no less than eight copies of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*).¹⁰ The presence of Hoccleve in this group of five gave us a clear, if rather tiny window on the role of civil service scribes in metropolitan literary vernacular book production around the turn of the century. It also alerted us to the fact that the reading audiences – at least the *professional* reading audiences – of Langland and Chaucer were not nearly so far apart as we had always thought. The implications of this were enormous, and many have just begun to be explored. Langland's extensive knowledge of legal terminology has also been well established¹¹ and, more recently, new evidence is emerging of Langlandian reading circles in the London and Dublin civil service, and of the moderate but 'visionary' reformist parliamentary thought of this civil service in relation to Langlandian political ideology.¹² The corpus of Scribe D, our most prolific, identifiable professional reader of Ricardian vernacular texts, reflects perhaps both the success and failure of this reformist project in a rapidly conservatizing political and ecclesiastical atmosphere by the turn of the century: given, on the one hand, the historical trajectory from the Rising of 1381, through the Appellants crisis, the deposition of Richard, to the subsequent need to shore up Lancastrian claims; and, on the other, the rise of Lollardy, alongside parallel fears of continental heresies and radical visionary thought, perhaps it is no wonder that Scribe D was copying Langland early and Gower late in his career.¹³ D is a superb example of a professional reader who silently filtered his Langland and his Chaucer texts for metrical and sometimes ideological 'impurities', and whose Westminster orientation shows in his substitution of words in the Ilchester prologue with some legal terminology of his own choice. Many of his manuscripts were created largely for a particular class of readers: lawyers, civil servants and

¹⁰ A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 163–210.

¹¹ J. Alford, *Piers Plowman: A Glossary of Legal Diction* (Cambridge, 1988). It should be noted that annotation in the manuscripts often reflects these interests: see, for instance, Schaap, 'Professional to Private Readership', on legal annotation in Digby MS 102.

¹² See R. Hanna, *William Langland* (Aldershot, 1993), pp. 23–4; his *Pursuing History*, pp. 236–7; Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Langlandian Reading Circles and the Civil Service in London and Dublin, 1380–1427', *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1998), 59–83; and 'Reformist Intellectual Culture in the English and Irish Civil Service: The *Modus tenendi parliamentum* and its Literary Relations', *Traditio* 53 (1998), 149–202.

¹³ Kerby-Fulton, 'Langland in his Working Clothes?'; Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Scribe D and the Marketing of Ricardian Literature', forthcoming.

parliamentarians associated with Westminster.¹⁴ Langland and Chaucer appear together in this corpus, of course, and it is notable in this regard that the only two wills in which they appear together reflect the same kind of audience: one drawn for a lawyer (Thomas Stoteyl) and one for a speaker of the House of Commons (Sir Thomas Charlton), both mid-fifteenth century.¹⁵

We can situate *Piers Plowman* manuscripts securely within Westminster culture, however, much earlier than that. The remainder of this article will be divided into three sections: the first, describing some evidence of government-trained scribes and scriveners and their responses to Westminster-related material in the poem; the second, outlining codicological links with politically active civil servants and politicians; and the third, examining the scribal and other evidence for the political circles in which the poem travelled abroad, in Anglo-Ireland. The results (at least, from the evidence gathered so far) suggest a poem transmitted among reformist political thinkers within the civil service itself, not just in the anarchical circles New Historicist studies have recently favoured.

Piers Plowman and the chancery tradition revisited

John Fisher identified for us several B Texts written in what he calls 'chancery hand', some of which date to the turn of the century or before.¹⁶ Although his definition of chancery hand needs some clarification (it will be refined below), and although the chancery hand only represents *one* type of governmental or administrative hand we can find in *Piers* manuscripts, Fisher was nonetheless right to stress the importance of this evidence. But it is clear that if we are going to search the manuscripts properly for the influence of such scribes, we need a more delicate set of tools, including a more accurate awareness of different types of government hands (both secular and ecclesiastical),¹⁷ government styles of layout, rubrication and informal marginal illustration (for instance of the Exchequer type), and a better sense of what a government-trained professional reader might actually emphasize in the text.¹⁸

We can now firmly connect scribes of *Piers* manuscripts with at least

¹⁴ See Doyle and Parkes, 'Production', appendix C.

¹⁵ A. S. G. Edwards, 'The Early Reception of Chaucer and Langland', *Florilegium* 15 (1998), 1–23.

¹⁶ J. Fisher, 'Piers Plowman and the Chancery Tradition', in *Medieval English Studies Presented to George Kane*, ed. E. D. Kennedy et al. (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 267–78.

¹⁷ See M. B. Parkes, *English Cursive Hands, 1250–1500* (London, 1969), p. xx.

¹⁸ For a recent study of this 'emergent class of secularized bureaucrats', see Ethan Knapp, 'Bureaucratic Identity and the Construction of the Self in Hoccleve's *Formulary* and *La male regle*', *Speculum* 74 (1999), 357–77.

three government offices: the Chancery, the Exchequer and the Privy Seal.¹⁹ To begin with the Chancery first, Fisher identified the following B manuscripts as containing chancery hands: Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 201; Cambridge, Newnham College, MS 4, and San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 128, London, British Library, MS Cotton Caligula A.XI, and Cambridge, University Library, MS Ll.4.14.²⁰ This grouping needs some qualification. Not all of these manuscripts really meet the criteria for 'chancery' hand set out by paleographers of government documents.²¹ The difficulty here for any scholar tackling the problem is that the distinctive 'set hand' of the chancery really only develops with consistency in the reign of Henry VI, and reaches its highest development in the sixteenth century²² – that is, later than we would wish for the study of many Langland manuscripts. But a perusal of Jenkinson's plates of letters patent from Chancery for 1362, 1377, 1398, 1412, 1429 and 1461 (plate XXXV) clearly shows many of the features already in place by the Ricardian and early Lancastrian period, as the 'Chancery Set Hand' developed from 'Bastard'. This is apparent especially in contrast to collections of documents of local origin (plate XXIV) or warrants under the Privy Seal (plate XXIII), or Exchequer documents (plate XXXVIII) for the same period, not to mention scrivener's hands (plates I to III). This earlier chancery hand is in fact distinguishable from bastard, although it takes a certain amount of patience. Its main features are as follows:²³ a lateral compression of minims, shortness of ascenders and descenders, a little extra width in the proportions of short letters (o, a, c); a two-compartment 'a', a two-compartment 'd', a two-compartment 'g' (with, however, more of an 'hourglass' look – that is, more hastily written – than the close anglicana version), an anglicana 'h', a one-stroke forwards 'e', the arabic 2-form 'r' (used after 'o' and 'a' only), small or no serifs on minims, a generally 'pointed

¹⁹ A. I. Doyle drew attention to the presence of 'an elegant set secretary of the kind employed by the Privy Seal and some other official scribes' in the Duke of Westminster's manuscript; in his 'Remarks on the Surviving Manuscripts of *Piers Plowman*', in *Medieval English Religious and Ethical Literature: Essays in Honour of G. H. Russell*, ed. G. Kratzmann and J. Simpson (Cambridge, 1986), p. 46.

²⁰ Fisher, 'Piers Plowman and the Chancery Tradition'.

²¹ See C. Johnson and H. Jenkinson, *English Court Hand, 1066–1500*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1915); H. Jenkinson, *The Later Court Hands in England: From the Fifteenth to the Late Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1927); L. C. Hector, *The Handwriting of English Documents* (London, 1966); on the problem with Fisher's designation of 'chancery hand', see Lister Matheson's review of J. Fisher, M. Richardson and J. L. Fisher, *An Anthology of Chancery English* (Knoxville, 1984), in *Speculum* 61 (1986), 647–8.

²² Jenkinson, p. 68.

²³ This list is derived from Jenkinson, pp. 68–70, and Hector, pp. 64–5, and accompanying plates; also from perusal of copies of several copies of Chancery documents that Tim Haskett has kindly made available to me. I would like to thank Carl Grindley for his invaluable assistance on this; he and Tim Haskett are collaborating on a larger study of government hands in *Piers* manuscripts.

appearance'; and, eventually, the use of suspensions and abbreviations conventionalized as 'a very thin horizontal dash, varied in some positions or by some scribes by a short curved one, is made to do duty for almost all the superior marks of abbreviation'.²⁴ These features give us a much more delicate system for determining chancery hand, which in Fisher's otherwise helpful study is unhelpfully confused with the development of secretary features imported from the *chancellerie royale* of Paris.²⁵ Among the five *Piers* B manuscripts Fisher identified as having been written in a chancery hand, the most striking, paleographically, are: Corpus Christi College, MS 201; Newnham College, MS 4, and Huntington Library, MS HM 128. But one would want to qualify his inclusion of the two other B texts, MS Cotton Caligula A.XI and Cambridge University Library, MS Ll.4.14,²⁶ because here these features are 'contaminated' by other influences. The former shows a more standard *anglicana formata* such as one sees, in its better moments, in London bookshops of the period (that is, first quarter of the fifteenth century),²⁷ in its worse, in Exchequer records;²⁸ the latter shows secretary influences which (along with evidence of its contents) connect it with a scribe of legal as well as governmental training.²⁹

Now that this group can be more precisely categorized, one can see many new connections in and among their textual relationships, their patterns of annotation, and their illustration (four of the five contain, unusually for *Piers* manuscripts, some kind of marginal illustration of the less formal kind done in scribal and rubrication ink: Corpus, Newnham, Cotton and HM 128). We cannot do more than mention a few of these connections here, but one of the most revealing is that two of the three manuscripts containing hands with strong chancery features, Corpus and Newnham, also have a form of annotation that explicitly highlights political issues of interest or concern to a Chancery clerk.³⁰ This is not only an affirmation of Fisher's original thesis, but an exciting extension of it, and, along with the evidence of Exchequer interests we will look at shortly in Cotton and in two C texts, we can begin to

²⁴ Hector, p. 65.

²⁵ Thus Fisher correctly identifies several B MSS as showing chancery influence, but confusingly gives only the features of 'secretary' hand as his criteria. The problem seems to be that most of the plates in his *Anthology of Chancery English* are in fact from the *Signet* office under Henry V, an office which was apparently highly aware of French traditions.

²⁶ Plates from all five of these manuscripts can be conveniently seen in C. D. Benson and L. Blanchfield, *The Manuscripts of the B Version of Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 1997).

²⁷ See Doyle, 'Remarks', 41. One might compare the hand of Scribe D.

²⁸ Johnson and Jenkinson, *Court Hands*, vol. 2, plate X, of Exchequer accounts of 1425.

²⁹ Compare the hands from the Scriveners' Common Paper for this period illustrated in Jenkinson, especially plate III (i)–(iii). This would be consistent with Andrew Galloway's findings about the contents of the manuscript in relation to 'business' schools; see '*Piers Plowman* and the Schools', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 6 (1992), 89–108.

³⁰ In this case words rubricated for emphasis within the text.

piece together a profile of some of the reformist and political views that early civil service readers brought to *Piers Plowman*.

The Prologue of the poem is an excellent place to look for civil service interventions, and the scribes of Corpus (F) and Newnham (Y) do not disappoint: in both manuscripts the scribes are also the rubricators, and, as a survey of all the B texts indicates,³¹ they are the only ones who pick out for special notice Langland's references to the Chancery, as for instance in his complaint that parish priests now flock to London, where:

Somme seruen þe kyng and his siluer tellen,
In Cheker and in Chauncelrie chalangen hise dettes
Of wardes and of wardemotes, weyues and streyves. (92-4)³²

F's scribe-rubricator highlighted the word 'Chauncery' in his rendering of line 93, after which he inserted, uniquely among B MSS, a line he apparently adapted from the A text: '& summe be Clerkis of þe kyngys bench þe cuntre to shende',³³ in which he rubricated both 'Clerkis' and 'kyngys'. Similarly, in Y 'chancerie' is rubricated, this time along with 'Cheker', and 'kyng' in line 92. What is most striking about this is not only that the whole passage goes unnoticed by rubricators or annotators in all other manuscripts³⁴ – suggesting that it is not of much interest to non-civil-service readers – but F's addition suggests the specific kind of political issue that piqued this group: here the overuse of 'king's clerks', which created jealousies among their lay and unbeneficed colleagues in the civil service. 'The rapid expansion of the legal profession in the late medieval period coincided with the development of a new careerism among laymen as employees of the king's . . . bureaucracies', as Maureen Jurkowski has explained; 'clerks were traditionally rewarded for their services through preferment to ecclesiastical benefices, but laymen required another form of payment'.³⁵ The issue of overuse of king's clerks seems to have been a real bone of contention by the turn of the century when F was made, and Langland's inclusion of this complaint ('þe cuntre to shende') as early as his A text suggests his own bitterness about bureaucratic issues. One also sees

³¹ Benson and Blanchfield's otherwise helpful Table of MS Annotations obscures this because they do not record F's.

³² Citations are from G. Kane and E. T. Donaldson, *Piers Plowman: The B Version* (London, 1975).

³³ See Kane and Donaldson, 221; they draw attention to its similarity to A Prol. 95, from which it must have been adapted. F is notorious for its scribal interventions, additions of spurious lines, and, at the same time, fascinatingly intelligent readings (see Hanna, *Pursuing History*, 216). Although the line might have been in his exemplar, given his intrusionist tendencies elsewhere, this seems unlikely.

³⁴ Unfortunately HM 128, our other chancery hand, contains virtually no annotations.

³⁵ M. Jurkowski, 'Lawyers and Lollardy in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. M. Aston and C. Richmond (New York, 1997), pp. 155–82.

it as the subject of an implicit reformist agenda for the anonymous civil service author(s) of the *Modus tenendi parliamentum*, a text probably written during Edward III's reign, and containing striking parallels to *Piers Plowman*.³⁶ F and Y are also the only B texts to highlight the words for both Exchequer and Chancery³⁷ in some little noticed lines from B.IV. 27–29, which occur as Conscience brings Reason at full gallop to Westminster to advise the king:

Oon waryn wisdom and witty his feere
Folwed h[e]m faste for þei hadde to doone
In [c]heker and in Chauncerye, to ben discharged of þynges.

As Conscience's subsequent lines make clear, these two are up to no good, but precisely what abuse of government courts they are perpetrating has been unclear to modern scholars, and possibly to many medieval readers. But Langland's chancery-trained scribes took a keen interest in the passage, and F, ever the enthusiast, even adds a collaborator ('& watte', line 27) for Waryn Wisdom and Witty.³⁸ Moreover, although there is not space here to detail each instance, both the scribes of F and Y participate in the Westminster section of the poem to a degree unparalleled in any other B text, highlighting the names of court officials, legal terminology, and, in F's case, embroidering and sometimes touting the role of the civil servants who surround Lady Mede, by spurious lines and additions, such as his '& þe Clerk gan conforte hire for gret conyng he hadde' (after III.10, emphasis mine). Despite the textual importance of this manuscript, there has been, as yet, little study of the scribe of F as a professional reader – and virtually none of his many spurious additions. Given the extensiveness of his supply, both in terms of additional material and annotation, there can be little doubt that it was the Corpus scribe-rubricator himself who created this body of unique material, and this makes our knowledge of his chancery training especially important. As Ralph Hanna has said of the manuscript, 'F is highly deviant textually, with more errors, unique readings (including substantial conflation from A manuscripts), and thoroughly spurious lines than any other copy customarily collated. But, from the standpoint of the scribe's enthusiastic reception of the poem, it may be the most interesting copy of any version except Bodley 851.'³⁹ This is, of course, the Z text, and as we will see shortly, the Z scribe also has

³⁶ Although the exact date of its composition is uncertain, we do know that it played an interesting role in Westminster politics of the 1380s, and captured the attention of the Appellants and their interests. See Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Culture'.

³⁷ F: 'Chekkeryȝe; Chawncerye'; Y: 'Cheker; chauncerie' (see Benson and Blanchfield's table for Y).

³⁸ No other manuscript records such a variant.

³⁹ Hanna, *Pursuing History*, p. 216; for a recent study of RF, see S. Taylor, 'The Lost Revision of *Piers Plowman* B', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 11 (1997), 97–134.

government features in his hand, and he is writing a text which (whoever composed it) also betrays an acute interest in documentary culture, and many of the features of professional readerly intervention.

One also finds traces or suggestions of Exchequer training in the activity of *Piers* scribes, most obviously, perhaps, in the illustrative programme of Douce 104, which bears many of the characteristics of the tradition of informal drawings (*signa*) used in that government office for the storage and retrieval of documents.⁴⁰ Exchequer-influenced scribes were comfortable with what Lucy Freeman Sandler refers to as a more casual approach to the page.⁴¹ This casual approach can suggest itself in a variety of ways, from fluctuating format (even within the same page) to fluctuating numbers of lines per page to a tendency to create casual marginal sketches. The Cotton manuscript identified above as having 'contaminated' chancery features also has the Exchequer penchant for rough marginal drawings in profile that could be (and have been) easily dismissed as mere doodling. So, for instance, what appeared to Benson and Blanchfield recently as merely 'comic profiles'⁴² in Cotton are in fact done in the style of marginal highlighting (that is, small roughly sketched half-figures in profile) very like those used by the Exchequer scribe, James le Palmer, to point up moral and religious content in his own off-duty didactic compilation, the *Omne bonum*. In Cotton's *Piers* text these little profiles, by no means always 'comic', seem to function as mnemonic devices: for example, a profile of Mary on fol. 254, pointing up the passage on the Annunciation in B.XVI.97 in which Mary first speaks, 'The Mayde myldeliche tho . . .'; or a profile of a bearded man, apparently Abraham, on fol. 255v, pointing up the passage in which he speaks (XVI.176ff).⁴³ Moreover, in the C text, San Marino, Huntington Library, MS HM 143, also copied in a government hand of the Exchequer type, the annotator created three informal marginal drawings on topics in the poem of Exchequer interest, namely: bribery, covetousness and appropriation of property to the crown.⁴⁴ Thus, a crown appears beside the C.V disendowment prophecy (line 168), an official Exchequer *signum* for matters done under the king's great seal;⁴⁵ a sketch of Lady Meed,

⁴⁰ See Kerby-Fulton and Despres, *Iconography*, pp. 23–4 and figure 69.

⁴¹ See Sandler, *Omne bonum*, vol. I (London, 1996), p. 66, for a detailed list of Exchequer 'informalities' of presentation.

⁴² Benson and Blanchfield, p. 186.

⁴³ Compare the instances in Sandler: e.g., her figures 84 or 85, or p. 107.

⁴⁴ For reproductions of these, see the facsimile, *Piers Plowman: The Huntington Manuscript (HM 143) Reproduced in Photostat*, with an Introduction by R. W. Chambers et al. (San Marino, 1936), fols. 10b, 26a, and 22a respectively. On the annotator-rubricator, see C. Grindley, 'From Creation to Desecration: The Marginal Annotations of *Piers Plowman* C-Text HM 143' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1991).

⁴⁵ Fol. 22a; for a plate of this crown image and discussion, see Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Tradition', plate 3 and pp. 187–90. For actual

perhaps inspired by the *signum* for Alice Perrers (III.1),⁴⁶ and finally a faithfully realized bust of Covetousness, appearing right next to Langland's delightful physical description (VI.196), and placed in relation to the text as bust *signa* are in many Exchequer documents.⁴⁷ I would suggest that manuscripts like Cotton Caligula and HM 143 were created by the kind of scribe used to connecting text with rough-hewn, often satirical, little images – and unable to resist the same temptation in (off-duty?) copying *Piers*.

Of course, not all scribal doodling can be traced back to Exchequer origin, but where we have other, independent, evidence (for example, the presence of government script), it is worth looking again at any informal sketches that appear – indeed, sketches of any sort in *Piers Plowman* manuscripts are rare enough to be notable. The flashes of satire we have seen in the embellishments of both Chancery and Exchequer trained scribes are reminiscent of the writing office humour and collegial ribbing that we have concrete evidence of in the works of James le Palmer and Thomas Hoccleve, and oblique evidence of in Langland (who comments, for instance, that anyone who mucks up a charter by bad copying or rubrication 'a goky is halden' (C.13.119)). This, probably, is the kind of office in which Langland himself must have drudged away some hours – certainly many of his professional readers had. On larger matters many of these clerks betray that peculiarly complex attitude toward the Church of those who feel themselves excluded from employment for which they were trained, and a perspective, both lay and not lay, on social, ecclesiastical and political matters. This perspective I have elsewhere called 'clericist'⁴⁸ – and Langland and many of his most probable, identifiable readers (such as Usk and Hoccleve and John But) all show this mentality and like to play upon it.

Another member of that club appears to have been the Z redactor. He is also

instances of the crown image, see Public Record Office *Liber Memoranda* E36/273, fols. 24, 31, 43v, 60; for transcriptions of the texts beside them, see F. Palgrave, *The Antient Kalendars and Inventories of . . . the Exchequer* (London, 1896), II, 21, 84, and 109. I would like to thank Josephine Matthews of the PRO for her help in searching these images.

⁴⁶ Fol. 10b, appearing just where Meed enters the Westminster world; the scribe appears to have playfully associated the 'curling' of the rubrication with the standard Exchequer symbol for Alice Perrers, with its satirically curly hair (see fig. 15 of plate 1 in Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Traditions'); the image of Perrers appears in PRO E36/273, fol. 9v; the text is transcribed in Palgrave, *Antient Kalendars*, I, 232; for another Perrers entry see II, 8. Whether or not the scribe suspected the historical allusion in Langland, he apparently knew this *signum* for a powerful, money-wielding woman. Alice Perrers, like Lady Mede at Westminster, peers out of Exchequer memoranda as a lone woman among men.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, the caricature bust of Richard II's half-brother, drawn under the unfriendly regime of Henry IV, PRO E36/273, fol. 39.

⁴⁸ 'Clericist Iconography and the Civil Service Scribe', in Kerby-Fulton and Despres, *Iconography*, pp. 18–25.

very fond of references to documentary matters, and, as a professional reader, is perhaps the most accomplished of them all (certainly he has led modern scholars on quite a wild-geese chase).⁴⁹ Whether this is in any way related to the fact that the hand of the Z text in Bodley 851 very closely resembles those used in the Scrivener's Common Paper,⁵⁰ we do not know, but, for instance, the Z editor's embellishments on notaries (II.40, 99, and 119) and his unilateral relegation of beggars to the *dorso* of Piers' pardon (VIII.69) all suggest a vivid sense of the documentary world. His eager participation in the Westminster section of the poem is evident throughout, and his trademark clericist concerns emerge in an obsession with the subject of benefices – their scarcity, and the suffering of 'poor clerks' because of widespread pluralism.⁵¹ Where F's interventions suggest a lay civil servant, Z's suggest perhaps an unbene-ficed colleague-in-waiting. He also has the 'visionary' penchant for legislating desired social reforms that is very Westminster in tone (seen in civil service writings like the *Modus tenendi parlamentum*, and the records of the Good Parliament):⁵² for example, Z's idea that princes and prelates should provide a 'pencyoun' for physicians, so that 'of no pore peple no peneworth gode' (VII.273) need be taken. Langland's own such 'legislation' tends to slip into the prophetic – a small step from the utopian idealism of this sort of civil service thought. That, like Hoccleve, he perhaps moonlighted as a literary scribe is suggested in Z's tendency to embellish Langland's text in the style of the professional 'reader-emendator' or annotator – he enthusiastically adds many lines of narrative summary 'annotation' or 'rubrication', recapping events, 'Ant how thys . . . And how . . . And how . . .'.⁵³ Z also likes to dwell upon the kind of crisis of occupation that clericist workers frequently found themselves caught in (certainly Langland and Hoccleve do),⁵⁴ which in Z's embellishment is larded with legal terminology such as we are coming slowly to see Langlandian reading circles seem to enjoy:

For *fodere non valeo*, so feble ar my bones:
Caucyon, ant Y couthe, *caute* wolde Y make
That Y ne begged ne borwed ne in despeyr deyde. (Z.V.142–4)

⁴⁹ For the text, *Piers Plowman: The Z Version*, ed. A. G. Rigg and C. Brewer (Toronto, 1983); for a recent overview of the controversy, Hanna, 'Bodley 851', in *Pursuing History*, pp. 195–204.

⁵⁰ See Jenkinson, *Later Court Hands*, plate I (ii), dated about 1390, for a hand very like the hand of Z (called Hand X by Rigg and Brewer; see their *Fasimile of the Z-Text* (Cambridge, 1994) for plates).

⁵¹ Z. Prol. 58 (on 'poor clerks'); III.32–3 (on buying benefices); IV.152 (against simony).

⁵² For instances of both, see Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Culture'.

⁵³ Z.II.163–70; see also II.1–3.

⁵⁴ It is impossible also not to see the mark of a Langlandian reading circle enthusiast in Z's use of certain motifs, such as the '*fodere non valeo*' topos, a mark of what I've elsewhere called 'bibliographic ego'; see 'Langland and the Bibliographic Ego', in *Written Work: Langland, Labour and Authorship*, ed. S. Justice and K. Kerby-Fulton (Berkeley, 1997).

As Rigg and Brewer explain, 'the reference is to the parable of the Unjust Steward, which explains the use of the technical term *caucion* (surety): the pun 'caute' is Z's (?) own: "For I cannot dig, so feeble are my bones. If I could, I would prudently make a down payment, in order not to beg or borrow or die in despair."' Z and F are both so skilled that they have been mistaken for Langland himself, but I would suggest that their Langlandianism is so convincing because they most certainly emanated from a milieu of clericist professional readers, of a kind that Westminster itself doubtless bred.

***Piers Plowman* manuscripts and Westminster book production**

The work of another scribe associated with Westminster brings us to a second area that is promising for uncovering the political orientation of the earliest *Piers* readers: book production circles. For instance, the C-text MS London, British Library, MS Additional 35157(U), with its modest but respectably illuminated opening initial in late fourteenth-century metropolitan style, was copied by a scribe named Preston, apparently the same Preston who copied the Litlyngton missal (London, Westminster, MS 37) – a manuscript, of course, of enormous Westminster significance.⁵⁵ The Litlyngton missal is one of a group of manuscripts that Sandler has identified as Westminster productions of the 1380s or early 1390s: including London, British Library, Cotton Nero D VI (a copy of the *Modus* and other government procedural treatises, fascinatingly tailored as Appellant propaganda); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 581, *Libellus geomancie*, a book on planetary and natural signs, advising on the duties of a king, and belonging to Richard II; and Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.10.2, an Apocalypse with scenes from the life of St John exactly equivalent to scenes in the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey.⁵⁶ This, then, is a prestigious and intriguing context for the production of a *Piers* manuscript, and not just any *Piers* manuscript: U is a very important copy of the C version, and also a very early one. How it was that Preston came to acquire such a good exemplar, we do not know, but it is significant that both U and the other 'best' C text, X (HM 143) can be associated with metropolitan government circles through their scribes. We are fortunate to know a bit about Thomas Preston from the Westminster Abbey Treasurer's roll entries on the Litlyngton Missal: it took him two years to copy it, and he was paid £4 less, that is, than the parchment cost, and a mere pittance compared to the £22 it cost simply for the illuminated letters (not counting the illustration).⁵⁷ While he was copying it he was given room, board and livery cloth – so, at

⁵⁵ On Add. 35157, and Preston, see C. Grindley, 'The Life of a Book: British Library Add. 35157 in Historical Context' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Glasgow, 1997).

⁵⁶ L. F. Sandler, *Gothic Manuscripts 1285–1385* (London, 1986), II, 172–8, for descriptions of these.

⁵⁷ Sandler, II, 173.

least for this job, he did not work on the premises of a workshop (suggestive of the scenario in which Doyle and Parkes find their scribes). The *Piers* manuscript he copied is, obviously, a much more modest production, but there are significant traces, especially in his d's and g's, of the *anglicana bastarda* he wielded in more lavish Westminster books. Moreover, the decoration of U is very reminiscent of Scribe D's Ilchester, another early metropolitan C-text, and the rubrication similar to that of HM 143.⁵⁸

Moreover, Doyle has linked decoration in another early *Piers* manuscript, the Vernon, to some of these manuscripts in Sandler's Westminster group, including the Litlington Missal itself, as well as the Royal Charter of Ipswich (1378), London, Westminster, MS 38, the *Liber Regalis* (c. 1382 or after), and Thomas Duke of Gloucester's Wycliffite Bible, London, British Library, MS Egerton 617-18.⁵⁹ We have, then, some connections – at least scribal or decorative – among certain *Piers* manuscripts and some politically important Ricardian books, two of which (the Thomas of Gloucester's Wycliffite Bible and the procedural treatises in Cotton Nero D.VI) were associated with the Appellants. Cotton Nero D. VI is a highly political production, containing the earliest and most important of the B versions of the *Modus tenendi parliamentorum*, a text with striking parallels to Langland's parliamentary and utopian ideas.⁶⁰ This treatise, which purports to be a practical manual for the working of parliament, perhaps typifies the reformist and meritocratic ideology of the civil service better than any single extant text, for instance in its assertions that two knights of the shire have more voice than all of the magnates in parliament, or that two proctors for the lower clergy have more voice than all the episcopal representatives; or, its assertion that there is no valid parliament without the commons, and that if the commons complain that the king does not govern them rightly, he cannot act without their consent. These are strikingly 'progressive' ideas, as are some of the text's more explicitly clericist ones, for instance, that transcripts of parliament should be available to anyone upon asking, even those too poor to pay for the copying.⁶¹ The *Modus* appears to have been known in political circles of Dublin in the early 1380s, then in Westminster in the mid-1380s, at the time of the Appellant crisis, perhaps promoted by pro-Appellant civil servants. In

⁵⁸ See Sandler's description of the more basic Litlington decoration: 'blue or pink frames with shaded white patterns' (p. 172), and M. C. Uhart's connection of U's decoration with Ilchester's and Vernon's ('The Early Reception of *Piers Plowman*' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leicester, 1986); here, I assume she means what Doyle called the 'type d' sprays of Vernon, whose decoration is, of course, mixed). See Doyle's Introduction to *The Vernon Manuscript: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Engl. Poet. a.1* (Cambridge, 1987).

⁵⁹ Doyle, *Vernon*, p. 8, and note 26.

⁶⁰ Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Culture'.

⁶¹ For the text of the B version, see N. Pronay and J. Taylor, *Parliamentary Texts of the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1980); for the assertions mentioned here, see pp. 113 and 114.

fact, the Nero manuscript was very likely associated with Thomas Mowbray, the youngest of the Appellants: his portrait appears as the climax to the iconographic programme, accompanying a letter appointing him Marshal of England (dated 1386). The iconography is clearly politically slanted, and audaciously anti-Richard: Richard is portrayed (fol. 70) with marked stupidity in the picture of his coronation, in contrast to, for instance, the wisdom of the Black Prince (fol. 31) or the idealized king (fol. 72) in the illustration introducing the *Modus*. The Appellants seem to have viewed the *Modus* mainly as a king-taming document,⁶² a reformist viewpoint on kingship that parallels Langland's own in places. We do not as yet know enough about the politics of the book production, patronage or reading circles in which *Piers Plowman* traveled, but we do know that another civil servant and owner of *Piers*, Walter de Bruges, worked in a high-security position for the Appellants and indeed wielded a certain amount of influence. As Rees Davies has written, he 'would have been party to some of the most intimate secrets of these tumultuous years. He was far better informed about the cut and thrust of political life and far better acquainted personally with the leading political heavyweights of this day than was the author of *Piers Plowman* himself.'⁶³

We also know that the scribes, like Thomas Preston, and the limners involved actually watched these texts come and go in production, and, as we have just seen, such professional readers often noticed and participated in the content of what they were copying (certainly the illustrator of the Nero manuscript must have been fully conscious of what he was doing). We know, moreover, that many of our *Piers* scribes were frequently (like the moon-lighting Hoccleve, and presumably some of our unidentifiable chancery hands) civil servants themselves. And civil servants, as we have just seen, were not without influence.⁶⁴ In de Bruges, for instance, we may have an instance of someone with much more *actual* power to influence the political process than a John Ball ever could have.

Piers Plowman and the professional reader abroad

By the time Walter de Bruges made the earliest known will to bequeath *Piers Plowman* he had been, among his other duties, the Second Baron of the

⁶² In the Nero MS iconography, the six grades of parliament are represented, though without any of the progressivist spirit of the treatise itself.

⁶³ On De Bruges I am indebted to Rees Davies for sending me a copy of his paper, 'The Life, Travels, and Library of an Early Reader of *Piers Plowman*', presented at the Medieval Academy of America conference in April 1999 (forthcoming in *Yearbook of Langland Studies* in 2000). On Walter de Bruges see also Kerby-Fulton and Despres, *Iconography*, p. 58 and notes.

⁶⁴ See the case of the chancery clerk, Geoffrey Martin, whose services were especially crucial to the Appellants, Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Culture', pp. 177–8.

Exchequer in Dublin. De Bruges, almost certainly Anglo-Irish himself, bequeathed his copy in Ireland, where the poem seems to have had a lively history within civil service circles of which this is only the first known instance.⁶⁵ It is to Ireland we must turn, last but not least, for the most spectacular evidence of clericist and professional readership for political ends. There, in 1418, a civil servant of the Ormond affinity was arrested for (it appears) his attempts to manipulate parliament on the strength of his copy of the *Modus* – as the *inspeximus* made on the occasion of the arrest shows.⁶⁶ The same civil servant was campaigning for the re-election of James Butler, then fourth earl of Ormond, as Lieutenant of Ireland, the campaign for which Yonge's 1422 *Secreta secretorum* translation (which borrows heavily from *Piers Plowman*) was apparently commissioned as an attempt to impress Henry V on behalf of Ormond.⁶⁷ Yonge's *Secreta* stresses the civil service belief in meritocracy and gives us some clues as to how *Piers Plowman* was being read in the Irish civil service of the 1420s – the same decade, of course, and the same milieu in which Douce 104 was made. The connection with the Butlers, in Yonge's translation for the earl, is striking, and it may be in this context, that is, in the Ormond affinity, that we find a scribe-illustrator of *Piers* so closely associated with government circles as to be illustrating the poem in the satirical style of the Dublin Court of Exchequer picture (see Plate 1). As I have suggested elsewhere, this picture, the only extant fragment from the Dublin *Red Book of the Exchequer*, and Douce 104 are so remarkably alike as to suggest (if we err on the side of caution) that they must have been done by scribe-illustrators of shared training, working in the same place (Dublin-Pale), and time. But new evidence from some of the hitherto illegible inscriptions makes a further possibility even more plausible: that both are by the *same* scribe-illustrator.⁶⁸ If so, this is important not only for the study of the Douce manuscript itself, but because it reveals our most creative professional reader of *Piers* as working (Hoccleve-like?) on the manuscript while actually pursuing a civil service career in the Exchequer. How this might illuminate the kind of reformist political ideology he brought to the poem, we will examine shortly, but first the evidence for the possibility that he is the *Red Book* artist.

We can now be a little more precise about the dating of the *Red Book* picture. A virtually illegible inscription, reading 'W(al)ter(us) Hille' appears above the

⁶⁵ See *Iconography*, pp. 57–8.

⁶⁶ Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Reformist Intellectual Culture'.

⁶⁷ Kerby-Fulton and Justice, 'Langlandian Reading Circles', and Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1996), p. 61.

⁶⁸ See *Iconography and the Professional Reader*, pp. xiv–xv and 94–6; I would like to thank Malcolm Parkes and Martha Driver for their suggestions, and especially thank DeLloyd Guth, and the staff of the Public Record Office in Kew, for their help and patience with these inscriptions. Some of the inscriptions were originally transcribed by J. Gilbert, *Facsimiles of the National Manuscripts of Ireland* (London, 1879), notes to plate 37, who had access to the original, now destroyed; others appear in *Iconography*, pp. 95–6.

Chief Remembrancer, portrayed at the top centre, examining his pen. He is critical to the dating of the picture, as is the figure beside him, the Clerk of the Pipe, casually preparing a writ (beginning formulaically 'henricus dei gratia') against his left knee, with his foot resting on the table. This indicates that the picture was done during the reign of one of the Henrys; the clothing styles rule out Henry VII's period (the high-necked houppeland was most fashionable in London during the reign of Henry V, 1413–1422),⁶⁹ and even allowing for some lag in fashion in the colonies, it is very unlikely that the picture is much later than the second quarter of the century, most likely early in Henry VI's reign. In fact, a 'Walterus Hille' appears in the Dublin Exchequer records for 1420.⁷⁰ This evidence, along with that of the semi-legible inscription 'Hoosee [?]', perhaps a reference to another Exchequer civil servant, Nicholas Hosse (who appears in the records for 1421), suggests that this picture likely dates from the 1420s.⁷¹ The Douce manuscript itself is explicitly dated by a colophon (1427) set out in the form used in government records and legal documents.

Although it is impossible to say for certain, the fact that the Douce artist draws upon Exchequer iconography, and was clearly at work in the same milieu in exactly the same decade as the *Red Book* artist, opens the way for him actually to be the scribe-illustrator who created the lively Dublin Exchequer court satire. And if it is not the same man, there was at exactly the same period another scribe-illustrator of the Dublin Exchequer whose artistic training is so similar that he can reproduce minutely the same facial, nasal, and eyebrow types, modes of speaking gesture, modes of caricature, and modes of text-image interaction. To examine these features in more detail (see Plate 2): the Lawyer and the Knight in Douce parallel very closely in style the first Suitor (Plate 1, bottom right) and the first Judge or Baron of the Exchequer (bottom left), representing the Douce artist's main caricature mode and authoritative mode respectively. The Douce Lawyer (Plate 2f)⁷² and the first Exchequer Suitor share exactly the same squared, pugnacious facial shape, the same treatment of nose lines and eyebrows,

⁶⁹ The temporal range of this style can be seen in K. Scott, *A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles: Later Gothic Manuscripts* (London, 1996), e.g., plate 201 (for Henry V's period) and plate 333 (for Henry VI's), dated 1446–1449. See also W. N. Hargreaves-Mawdsley, *A History of Legal Dress in Europe* (Oxford, 1963), plate 11, the Court of Chancery c. 1460, and frontispiece, the Court of Exchequer, c. 1460. I would like to thank Maidie Hilmo for her advice about this.

⁷⁰ H. G. Richardson and G. O. Sayles, *Parliaments and Councils of Medieval Ireland* (Dublin, 1947), p. 182.

⁷¹ See Richardson and Sayles, p. 163, for Hosse. The name is a variant of 'Hussey' or 'Huse' during this period. I would like to thank DeLloyd Guth for advice about this.

⁷² Kathleen Scott records surprise that the Lawyer is not represented in the stereotypical 'coif', but the artist's point was to show the 'furred hoods' that Langland loves to complain of with respect to the legal profession. See her catalogue to the illustrations in *A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Douce 104*, introduced by D. Pearsall and K. Scott (Cambridge, 1992).



Plate 1 The Dublin Court of the Exchequer, from *The Red Book of the Exchequer* (original now destroyed), copy reproduced from John Gilbert, *Facsimiles of the National Manuscripts of Ireland*, vol. 3 (London, 1879), plate 37. Anglo-Irish, second quarter of the fifteenth century.



2a. Douce 104, fol. 46r. Franciscan friar.

Plate 2 From Bodleian Library MS Douce 104, *Piers Plowman* (the C version). Anglo-Irish, 1426.



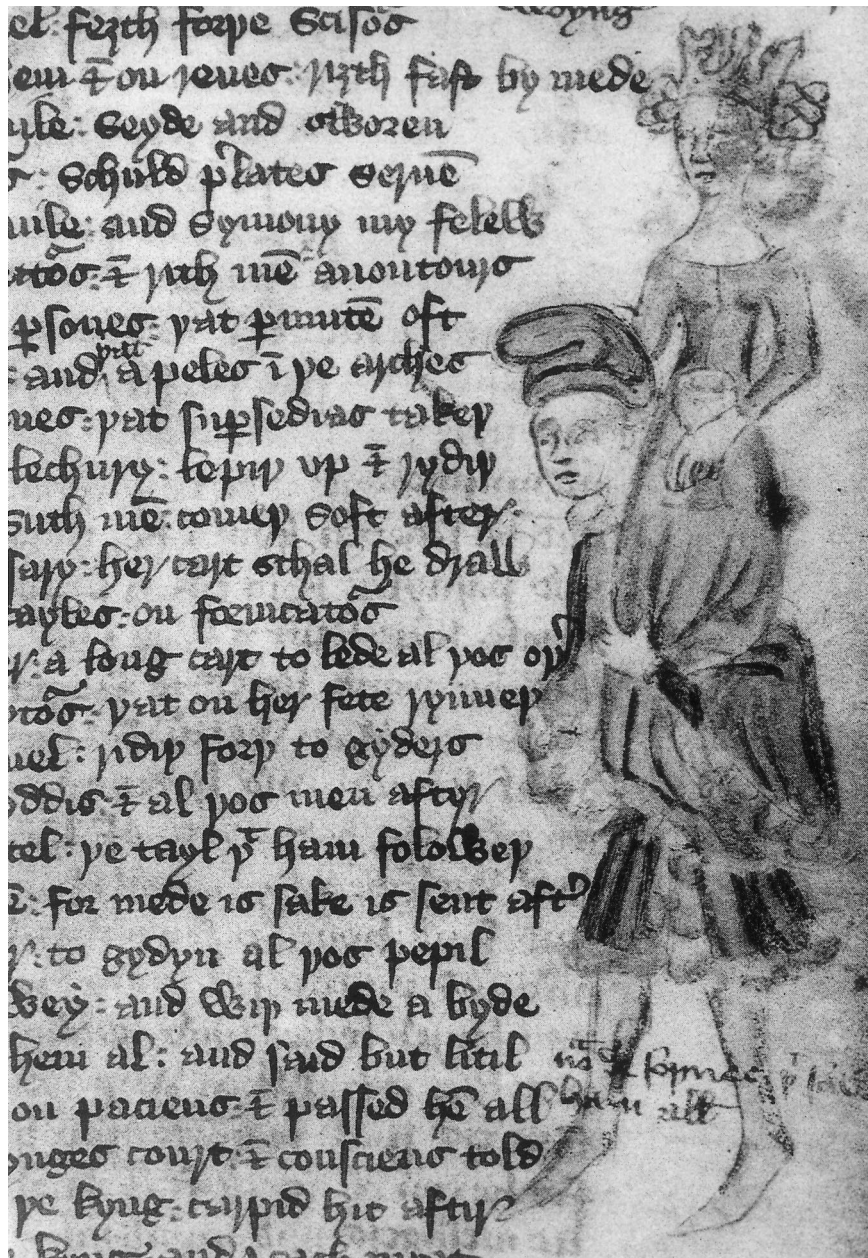
2b. Douce 104, fol. 52v. Clerk



2c. Douce 104, fol. 53r. Recklessness.



2d. Douce 104, fol. 35v. Knight.



2e. Douce 104, fol. 10r. Sheriff.



2f. Douce 104, fol. 41r. Lawyer.

and the same open-mouthed defiance that the Douce artist uses exclusively to indicate brashness or inappropriate outspokenness. (His figures usually speak only 'gesturally', not literally.) Similarly, the Douce Knight (Plate 2d) and the first Baron exhibit the same style of elegantly tapered face, the same forked beard, and treatment of the eyebrows, type of headdress, and the look of intelligent concentration (allowing for the slight defiance of the Douce knight's stance and expression). But there are several other figures in the *Red Book* picture with close cousins in Douce: the Usher (crying a premature 'A demain' in the top right-hand corner), has the sharply backangled nose and strangely prominent nostril of Douce's Recklessness (Plate 2c).⁷³ The round-faced Second Baron of the *Red Book* (just above the First Baron in Plate 1) represents another facial type similar to several in Douce (in treatment of eyebrows, and triangular nose), as in the Sheriff (Plate 2e) on whose back Lady Mede rides in Douce, and whose style of cap is exactly the same. Several of the facial types of the *Red Book* clerks (a group that tends to be less caricatured on the whole – the group to which, presumably, the artist belonged!) also have parallels in Douce: posed in almost exactly the same gesture, and with a similar pointed and notched nose, are the Marshal of the Exchequer (in the extreme upper left-hand corner) and Douce's Franciscan friar (Plate 2a), both in profile, with the distinctive open-handed speaking gesture the Douce artist uses for explanatory speech acts. And Douce's clerk on 52v (Plate 2b, apparently Will writing) looks like a cross between the Clerk of the Pipe (top center), and the curly-haired Remembrancer beside him, with a pen in his mouth. The similarity between the Third Suitor, and Douce's Recklessness (and his Trajan, fol. 56r, who also points to his mouth) is also striking.

It is clear that the person who created the *Red Book* picture was also, like the Douce artist, a scribe, given the liveliness and creativity of the interaction between text and image in the picture, which functions on several levels. And there is a strong similarity between the hand the Douce scribe uses for his only two marginal annotations, written inscription-style in red: 'cronicil' and 'bibil' (fol. 23v), and the more informal hand the *Red Book* artist uses: the same 'b' (see 'oy de brie'), and the same 'c' and 'r' in 'Baga cum rotuli' – a reference to the counters used. While the sample of the Douce scribe's informal hand is too small to make any definitive statement, it is at least worth noting that the inscriptions, not simply the pictures, would support the attribution.

If these artists are the same man, or, at the very least, colleagues working in the Dublin Exchequer in the 1420s, what kind of workplace was it? To understand something of the in-house satire the Exchequer artist is depicting, there is no better or more vivid description of actual Exchequer court corruption than Hubert Hall's account of contemporary charges against it:

⁷³ Compare also 'Sleighte' (Trickery), on 108v.

In the first place a lamentable want of discipline and consequent diminution of zeal in the service of the Crown is alleged against the ministers of the Exchequer . . . The Barons were occupied in hearing common pleas which were brought before them by favoured and, presumably, not ungrateful suitors, who were well aware of the advantages to be derived from the expeditions and peremptory processes of a court whose machinery, perfected during two centuries of invention and careful experiment, worked more smoothly than that of the King's Court. As a natural consequence of this increased resort to the Court, the accounts of the Sheriffs and Bailiffs were delayed or, when at length taken, were scrambled through in the midst of a hubbub and confusion that were not calculated to ensure accuracy . . . At the same time the respective officers and clerks of the court were, as we know, engaged either in their private affairs or in the congenial task of exacting unauthorized fees from suitors and accountants. Moreover, although the ordinary business of the Court had increased enormously during the century after the date of the *Dialogus*, scarcely any provision had been made for coping with this pressure, either by an increase of the staff or by new methods of entering and auditing the royal revenues.⁷⁴

The artist, then, manages to capture all this: the noise and the concentration, the professionalism and the corruption, the press and the power, the mix of languages, the legalities and the infringements, and, at the centre of it all, the green chequered cloth, the 'Baga cum rotuli' and the puny, wretched, faceless sheriff (at the foot of the table) being audited. This is the inner sanctum of the world against which the poems of social protest register 'popular' perceptions, such as the illiterate's terror of documents sealed with green wax. But like the authors of those poems, these, too, are clerks with complex social allegiances and sympathies: factional loyalties, cynicism, conservatism, reformist passions, office satire and honest indignation all rub shoulders here. It is intriguing to think of this as a picture perhaps created *by* a famous clericist professional reader of *Piers Plowman*, and also to think of it as containing glimpses of other kinds of readers of the poem: Walter de Bruges was, we know, a Second Baron of the Dublin Exchequer in this same office a few decades before, and, more anonymously, here we have Exchequer clerks of the kind who, both here and in Westminster, doubtless also moonlighted, creating manuscripts like HM 143 and Cotton Caligula – and, of course, Douce itself.

These civil service readers of *Piers* were, for the most part, not high enough up the administrative ladder to be deciding policy, but they were certainly *recording* it (as Walter Hill's raised pen emphasizes), or even drafting it (like the author of the *Modus*), or making it practically possible (like Walter de Bruges), or (like James Yonge) writing exhortations to a governor on matters of policy, or (like the Douce artist or redactors of F or Z) silently shaping the emotional responses of patrons and readers for generations to come. There is,

⁷⁴ Hubert Hall, *The Red Book of the Exchequer*, RS 99, vol. 3 (London, 1896), pp. cccxlvii–cccxlvi, referring to the *Dialogus de Scaccario*.

then, much evidence of the politicized quality of *Piers* reception both in Westminster and Dublin – much of it as yet fragmentary and circumstantial. But the study of it nonetheless can eventually release us from the monolithic constructions of ‘Lollardy and subversion’ criticism, under which perhaps Langland reception studies have laboured too long.

Professional Scribes? Identifying English Scribes Who Had a Hand in More Than One Manuscript

LINNE R. MOONEY

John Shirley, Thomas Hoccleve, John Capgrave, Stephen Doddesham, the 'Ellesmere-Hengwrt scribe', the 'Hammond scribe', the 'Edmund-Fremund scribe', the 'hooked-g scribe', 'Doyle and Parkes's scribe D' are only a few of the scribes whose hands have been found in more than one medieval English manuscript. Identification of these hands began in the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, the volume of scholarly activity focussed on identification of hands has increased almost without interruption to the present day, as ease of transportation, greater accessibility to libraries, lower costs of photo-reproduction and new technologies have made it easier – though never easy – to compare hands in manuscripts now scattered worldwide. This activity is bound to increase still more now that digital image technology has made reproductions of medieval manuscripts substantially more accurate than before and electronic media have made them substantially more accessible. In this paper I shall try to give an overview of the discoveries made to date in this field, many of them by contributors to this volume: I shall describe the confusions that have arisen from inaccurate and misleading identifications made in the past, and the advances in our knowledge about medieval manuscript production and distribution that have resulted from more recent, accurate identifications. I shall end with my ideas about new directions for this field of medieval manuscript study.

To get a sense of where we are with this line of enquiry, it is necessary to look back to the work of scholars in the past upon whose foundations we are building. How much more difficult was the identification of hands in the nineteenth century is illustrated by misidentifications upon which scholars relied and which scholars repeated for decades before correction. One such is Henry Bradshaw's identification of the hand of a manuscript now in Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library, MS Eng. 530, which I selected and for which I wrote the label for the exhibition of medieval manuscripts at the Houghton Library presented in conjunction with the *New Directions* conference in October 1998.¹ The manuscript's contents include

¹ 'New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies', at the Houghton Library, Friday 23 October 1998.

copies of *Guy of Warwick*, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, *The Serpent of Division* and a prose *Brut* with continuations. In an article published in 1899, 'On Two Manuscripts of Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick*', F. N. Robinson claimed that Houghton Library, MS Eng. 530 was written by John Shirley.² Robinson was basing his claim on a letter written in 1866 by Henry Bradshaw to the then owner of the manuscript, Mr Lilly, stating with no reservations that 'the scribe of your MS' is 'John Shirley'.³ There is no indication in the letter as to where or for how long Bradshaw had had access to the manuscript before making this statement; we do not know whether he had other Shirley manuscripts to hand for direct comparison, or was relying on memory. Probably he based his identification upon the Shirleian prologues in Houghton Library, MS Eng. 530, apparently copied from a true Shirley manuscript, and some similarities of writing style and format, as I noted in the exhibition label: elaboration of ascenders on the top line, particularly favouring a feathered pattern; elaboration of descenders into crossed loops; crescent-shaped dotting of 'i' and 'y'; extensions at the ends of words; and distinctions between rubric and text letter forms that sometimes coincide with those in the Shirley MS, Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20, among others. Robinson accepted Bradshaw's attribution to Shirley without question, and others followed suit. It was repeated by Eleanor Hammond in her 1907 article, 'Ashmole 59 and Other Shirley Manuscripts' and her 1927 book, *English Verse from Chaucer to Surrey*, among others.⁴ In *The Chaucer Tradition*, Aage Brusendorff described Eng. 530 as one of only 'six more or less complete Shirley autographs . . . now extant'.⁵ Even though he noted that '[l]ists of Shirley's MS collections of poetry and prose have frequently been given, though generally wrongly' and 'the true autographs are often confused with mere copies', he included Eng. 530 in his list of 'generally recognized' autographs, while noting that '[he had] not examined [it himself]'.⁶ The misattribution carried through De Ricci and Wilson, who accepted Robinson's (i.e., Bradshaw's) attribution in their *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada*, published in 1940.⁷ Then, in 1950, Ian Doyle wrote to the Houghton librarian to explain that the manuscript was not a Shirley autograph, based on comparison of photocopies of two pages from the Houghton manuscript with other Shirley manuscripts.⁸

² F. N. Robinson, 'On Two Manuscripts of Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick*', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 5 (1899), 177–213, esp. 177–9.

³ This letter from Henry Bradshaw is kept with the manuscript in the Houghton Library.

⁴ E. P. Hammond, 'Ashmole 59 and Other Shirley Manuscripts', *Anglia* 30 (1907), 320–48, esp. 346–8; Hammond, *English Verse Between Chaucer and Surrey* (Durham, NC, 1927), pp. 192–3.

⁵ A. Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition* (Oxford, 1925), pp. 207–38, esp. pp. 207, 212–13.

⁶ Brusendorff, pp. 207 and 215.

⁷ S. De Ricci and W. J. Wilson, *Census of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the United States and Canada* (New York, 1935–40), pp. 966–7.

⁸ Doyle's letter, too, is kept with the manuscript in the Houghton Library.

Comparison of scribal hands in years before photographs, or before microfilms and photocopies became readily available, depended upon a scholar's memory, upon tracings or *aides memoire* unique to each scholar, or upon the coincidence of two or more manuscripts by a single hand surviving in one library. Even though collocation would have made identification possible, unfortunately the cataloguers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who examined whole collections closely do not seem to have been interested in scribal hands: for example, the distinguished cataloguer M. R. James, in his detailed descriptions of Cambridge, Trinity College, MSS R.3.19 and R.3.21, which share not only a main scribe but many idiosyncratic details of layout and construction, never mentioned that they were written by the same scribe; he even dates one 'not far from 1500', citing Skeat, and the other 'Cent. XV (temp. Edward IV)', i.e., 1461–1483.⁹ James was apparently not interested enough in handwriting to notice the identity of the hand in these two manuscripts, though he must have examined them within a few days of each other in writing his catalogue; only one volume, R.3.20, stands between them on the shelf. John Shirley's signatures and prologues made identification of *his* manuscripts easier, but generally, before photography became more accurate and less expensive, scholars shied away from identifying hands in more than one manuscript. Even as late as 1940, Manly and Rickert complained that '[u]nfortunately there has been little systematic study of literary handwritings in the 14th and 15th centuries either for the purpose of more accurate dating or to ascertain whether any definite styles can be assigned to particular centres'.¹⁰

In spite of her blind following of Bradshaw in the matter of Harvard's Eng. 530, I would dub Eleanor Hammond the mother of modern studies of scribal hands. In her articles, 'Two British Museum Manuscripts (Harley 2251 and Adds 34360) . . .' in 1905 and 'Ashmole 59 and Other Shirley Manuscripts' in 1907, and still more in her important article, 'A Scribe of Chaucer' in 1929, she initiated a new field of inquiry in manuscript studies and demonstrated how much could be learned from it.¹¹ Hammond identified six manuscripts written by her Chaucer scribe, all of them copies of major literary pieces or anthologies of minor ones. Over the seventy years since publication of her 'A Scribe of Chaucer' article, several other scholars, principally Ian Doyle, but also Richard Firth Green, Jeremy Griffiths and myself, have added to the list of manuscripts written by this hand, bringing the total now to fifteen.¹² This

⁹ M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge: A Descriptive Catalogue*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1900–1904), II, 83 and 69.

¹⁰ J. M. Manly and E. Rickert, *The Text of The Canterbury Tales, Studied on the Basis of All Known Manuscripts*, 8 vols. (Chicago, 1940), I, 23.

¹¹ E. P. Hammond, 'Two British Museum Manuscripts (Harley 2251 and Adds 34360): A Contribution to the Bibliography of John Lydgate', *Anglia* 28 (1905), 1–28; 'A Scribe of Chaucer', *Modern Philology* 27 (1929), 27–33; for 'Ashmole 59', see note 4.

¹² A. I. Doyle, 'An Unrecognized Piece of *Piers the Ploughman's Creed* and Other Work

hand is so distinctive, so relatively easy to describe and identify, that we have been able to find it in non-literary manuscripts, which literary scholars seldom open or examine: besides two copies of *The Canterbury Tales*, two of Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* and minor literary works, this scribe was responsible for copying a collection of devotional works, an encyclopedic anthology of medicine and science, a copy of the Statutes of the Realm, one book of precedents for London city and guild organizations and another for the rights and responsibilities of the Earl Marshall, Constable, and Kings of Arms.¹³ From these discoveries, we have learned a great deal about the production of literary texts in London in the second half of the fifteenth century, and we owe these discoveries to the distinctiveness of this scribe's handwriting.

Scholars have been active in identifying other hands that appear in more than one manuscript over those same seventy years. We who study English manuscripts are partly hampered by the fact that it was not the custom in England, as on the continent, for scribes to sign their work. In some rare instances, a scribe who did sign his work, like John Shirley, helps us to identify the manuscripts he wrote. In most cases, however, the scribes' names remain unknown, so we invent pseudonyms for them: the 'Edmund-Fremund' scribe, Doyle and Parkes's scribes 'D' and 'delta', the 'Hammond' scribe, the scribe of the Trinity anthologies. We identify them through the distinct features of their handwriting, as compared with photographs of other manuscripts written by them, and we provide verbal descriptions of these distinct scribal features to accompany illustrative photographs when we publish articles and books about them.¹⁴

by its Scribe', *Speculum* 34 (1959), 428–36; A. I. Doyle, 'English Books in and out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII', in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (London, 1983), pp. 163–81; R. F. Green, 'Notes on Some Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*', *British Library Journal* 4 (1978), 181–2, 207–12, 222; Manly and Rickert, *Text of The Canterbury Tales*, I, 241–4, 439–46, 476–81; S. Lerer, 'British Library MS Harley 78 and the Manuscripts of John Shirley', *Notes & Queries* 235 (1990), 400–3; P. Christianson, 'Evidence for the Study of London's Late Medieval Manuscript-Book Trade', in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, England, 1989), pp. 87–108; L. R. Mooney, 'More Manuscripts Written by a Chaucer Scribe', *The Chaucer Review* 30 (1996), 401–7.

¹³ See Mooney, 'More Manuscripts Written by a Chaucer Scribe', 403–5; L. R. Mooney, 'A New Manuscript by The Hammond Scribe Discovered by Jeremy Griffiths', in *The English Medieval Book: Essays in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards, R. Hanna, and V. Gillespie (London: British Library, forthcoming).

¹⁴ For example, A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century', in *Medieval Scribes, Manuscripts and Libraries: Essays Presented to N. R. Ker*, ed. M. B. Parkes and A. G. Watson (London, 1978), pp. 163–210 for descriptions of the five hands of Trinity College, Cambridge MS R.3.2; Doyle, 'An Unrecognized Piece of *Piers the Ploughman's Creed*', pp. 429–30 for description of the hand of the Hammond scribe.

Mention of these verbal descriptions leads me to another point, that is, that our ability to identify a hand in more than one manuscript has been advanced not only by technology but also by scholarship. Until a few decades ago, even when scholars drew attention to identities of hands, they lacked the vocabulary with which to describe them. John M. Manly and Edith Rickert had photostats of most of the manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* from which to write their descriptions, but their depictions of scribal characteristics were vague and undefined: describing the hand of the 'hooked-g' scribe in the Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.3; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson poetry 223; and Devonshire copies of the *Canterbury Tales*, and the Clumber Gower, they called it '[o]ne small, cramped scrivener's hand' (I, 522, describing Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.3) or just '[o]ne scrivener's hand throughout' (I, 117, describing Devonshire); they described the Hammond scribe's handwriting as 'One fluent professional hand' (I, 439, describing London, Royal College of Physicians, MS 13). With the publication of Malcolm Parkes' *English Cursive Book Hands* in 1969 and other works that followed it, scholars had a schema for categorizing and a vocabulary for describing medieval English handwriting that could be employed to compare the general characteristics of one hand with those of another.¹⁵

Even with photographs and descriptions, however, it is difficult to distinguish one late medieval scribal hand from another. In particular, professional scribes, whose hands are most likely to survive in more than one manuscript, were able to write in more than one style, anglicana, secretary, textura; and in the fifteenth century the boundaries for letter forms between anglicana and secretary were quite fluid. Besides the confusing mixture of letter forms, late medieval English scribes pose other problems of identification for the paleographer. Manly and Rickert (I, 23) noted that

[t]he same hand may look very different under different conditions of work, as when the writer is rested or fatigued, calm or nervous, or when he is writing in the upper or the lower half of a large page. Several scribes trained by the same master may seem to be a single scribe . . . [and] . . . Even if two scribes working on the same MS normally write very differently, one may try to imitate the other when he continues his work.

The scribe of the Trinity anthologies, MSS R.3.19 and R.3.21, illustrates many of these difficulties: in writing the 9 booklets of one and 12½ of the other manuscript, he wrote in various sizes and with various degrees of formality or care.¹⁶ He employed secretary script for his texts in both manuscripts, and

¹⁵ M. B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands 1250–1500* (Oxford, 1969).

¹⁶ See L. R. Mooney, 'Scribes and Booklets of Trinity College, Cambridge, MSS R.3.19 and R.3.21', in *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions. Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, ed. Alistair Minnis (forthcoming). Further description of details of this hand in this paragraph are also from this forthcoming article.

a bastard anglicana or fere textura for headings; but in another manuscript by his hand, Bodleian Douce 322, he employed the bastard anglicana for text as well as headings of some of the works he transcribed. He demonstrated that he was also capable of copying another scribe's style and format when he picked up in mid-stanza from a portion of R.3.21 written by the 'Hammond' scribe, on folio 49v.

In the second half of this century, Malcolm Parkes and Ian Doyle have been responsible for redefining the study of scribal hands in English manuscripts, establishing both methodology and vocabulary for this sub-set of manuscript studies. In their ground-breaking article on 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century', they explained that they begin identification of a scribal hand by considering the aspect and duct of the hand.¹⁷ Aspect and duct constitute the general appearance of the script on a page: just as any of us could recognize our mother's handwriting from crossing a room in which her letter lay on the desk, a scholar who has become familiar with a scribal hand can establish a likelihood of its identity in the first instance by a quick glance. Describing what it is about that hand that allows you to make the identification is more difficult: familiarity allows for intuitive identification, but this must be verified and then described using more objective terms. Distinctive letter forms, particularly of upper case letters and final letters, otiose strokes, punctuation, scribal habits, layout, all contribute to recognition of a hand. One scribe has a very distinctive graph for letter 'g', another tends to stretch his leading strokes for initials into the left margin, another extends the ascenders of the top line into the upper margin, one adds a unique otiose stroke to final letters, another bears down particularly heavily on the long vertical strokes of 'f', long-'s', and 't', and so forth. Following Parkes' and Doyle's examples over the last fifty years, published works that describe hands now almost always include an illustration, with commentary drawing attention to such details of the script by line, word and letter.

My title asks the question of whether the hands we detect in more than one manuscript are those of professional scribes. Doyle and Parkes offered a definition of professional scribal hands in their article, 'The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and *Confessio Amantis*' (p. 167); it reads: 'the quality of the individual workmanship within the stints is very high . . . each hand is that of a proficient scribe who maintains a uniform quality throughout his stints, and exhibits the personal stamp of the practised craftsman . . .'. From their further specification related to two manuscripts written by their scribe 'D', 'uniform quality' of the workmanship seems to be limited to what one would understand by 'quality' since it does not extend to uniformity of size, letter forms or formality.¹⁸ It is evidenced instead by the ability to write

¹⁷ Doyle and Parkes, 'The Production of Copies', pp. 167–8.

¹⁸ Doyle and Parkes, in 'The Production of Copies', p. 178, point out two manuscripts

clearly and to maintain duct, aspect and consistent style through a long piece of writing. I would like to suggest that other characteristics by which we might identify the work of professional scribes are survival of the hand in more than one manuscript; ability to write in more than one style and maintain consistency in letter forms within a style; employment of certain details of layout, such as writing headings in a different style from text or accounting for formal glosses or commentary in margins when ruling; or evidence of collaboration with other professional scribes and/or with an artist or atelier. An amateur scribe might write more than one manuscript, perhaps a collection of recipes for one and a commonplace book for the other, but his manuscripts would not manifest the other traits of a professional scribe I have just named. To be classified as having been written by a professional, a manuscript need not exhibit all of these qualities, however: we might find a single manuscript by a hand we would call professional even though only one specimen survived, because it exhibited so many of the other qualities of professional workmanship.

The identification of late medieval professional scribes' hands in multiple manuscripts helps us to a better understanding of the book trade in the hundred years leading up to the advent of moveable type in Britain and in the early years thereafter when printers and scribes competed for market share. It helps us to understand the patrons of book production and distribution and the means of production and distribution, which in turn helps us to understand the original audience, especially for literary works, in this period and the changes in content, mode, tone etc. as patrons ranged from single noble supporters to multiple middle class readers whose tastes varied.

The evidence we have amassed to date from the study of professional scribal hands is still scant and at times seemingly contradictory. After identifying six manuscripts written by her 'scribe of Chaucer', Eleanor Hammond had learned that he was working in London in the second half of the fifteenth century, probably approximately during the reign of Edward IV (1461–1483), and that he had had access to the manuscripts of John Shirley after Shirley's death. She concluded: 'How can we account for him except as a professional employed in a *scriptorium* or a publishing business, where many codices were in stock to furnish bases for reproduction?'¹⁹ On the other hand, Doyle and Parkes' study of a manuscript prepared by five professional scribes concluded

[The] lack of adequate coordination and of immediate supervision in Trinity College MS R.3.2 is the principal clue to the relationship between the five scribes involved in its execution. They appear to have been

by their 'D' scribe, 'Oxford, Bodleian Lib., MS Bodley 294 and London, Brit. Lib., MS Egerton 1991, [in which] the handwriting is somewhat larger, more formal, the long- and secretary s appear rarely and the word "and" is rarely abbreviated' as compared with other manuscripts they identify as being written by this hand.

¹⁹ Hammond, 'A Scribe of Chaucer', p. 29.

independent craftsmen who were employed on a particular commission, not as members of a scriptorium or workshop. The exemplar seems to have been farmed out to the several copyists portion by portion.²⁰

More recently analyzed evidence of professional scribes points to workshop conditions: the Edmund-Fremund scribe seems to have been working in Suffolk in some continuing relationship with a group of artists, and the scribe of the Trinity anthologies seems to have had close working relationships with at least one scribe and one artist in London.²¹ In 'Retrospect and Prospect' in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England*, published in 1981, Ian Doyle summed up the disparity of these pieces of evidence:

There is now appearing a landscape of, on the one hand, overlapping work by scribes and decorators probably for the metropolitan book-trade and, on the other, of more self-contained circles of craftsmen based on one locality or specialising in one type of text, such as the Lydgate manuscripts probably from Suffolk.²²

We need further study of the professional hands of late medieval England to get a clearer picture of how to reconcile these two landscapes.

Some of the evidence from multiple manuscripts produced by professional scribes in the years leading up to 1475 suggests that they were producing multiple copies of books for sale, rather than writing only on commission for a patron. Doyle and Parkes' scribe 'D' of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.2 had a hand in no fewer than eight copies of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*;²³ the Edmund-Fremund scribe had a hand in eight Lydgate manuscripts, including four copies of the lives of saints Edmund and Fremund;²⁴ the Hengwrt-Ellesmere scribe seems to have been closely supervised in producing the two earliest known copies of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, but also had a hand in copying Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and part of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.²⁵ The scribe of the Trinity anthologies seems to have copied most of his booklets to remain in his possession, perhaps serving as exemplars for the books he could offer to copy and sell.²⁶ Specialization in a single author or single text seems to increase with the years in the fifteenth century, suggesting that by mid-century scribes were producing multiple

²⁰ Doyle and Parkes, 'The Production of Copies', p. 167.

²¹ See K. L. Scott, 'Lydgate's Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund: A Newly-Located Manuscript in Arundel Castle', *Speculum* 13 (1982), 335-66, esp. 360-6; Mooney, 'Scribes and Booklets', forthcoming.

²² A. I. Doyle, 'Retrospect and Prospect', in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, 1983), p. 145.

²³ Doyle and Parkes, 'The Production of Copies', p. 177.

²⁴ Scott, 'Lydgate's Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund', pp. 342-3, 355-7 etc.

²⁵ Doyle and Parkes, 'The Production of Copies', p. 170.

²⁶ Mooney, 'Scribes and Booklets', forthcoming.

copies of texts on speculation for sale in the capital. If such could be shown to be the case, we might conclude that professional scribes had already created a market for multiple copies of literary texts before the advent of print and that therefore print came in response to demand rather than having created its market after 1475. In other words, perhaps printing was a viable enterprise in England from its inception because professional scribes had already created the market for multiple copies of texts.

It appears that the early printers and the late scribes were being supported by the same classes of society, as well. John Shirley had been clerk for Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, before he took up his trade in copying and lending collections of literary works;²⁷ the 'Hammond' scribe seems to have been connected to the house of Sir Thomas Cook, Grocer, and also possibly had connections with the Heralds or the City of London;²⁸ the scribe of the Trinity anthologies perhaps had connections with William Baron, a Teller of the Exchequer, and perhaps in the later fifteenth century with Roger Thorne, Mercer, patron of Wynkyn de Worde, through whom his booklets passed to William Middleton, printer.²⁹ William Caxton was a member of the Mercer's Company. While at present the explicit connections to these patrons and associations are tenuous, further study of the scribes who had a hand in more than one manuscript will help us to understand better the intellectual climate and economic market for mass-produced books in England immediately preceding the advent of moveable type.

Unfortunately, the ease of obtaining photographs (or worse, of obtaining fuzzy photocopies), the vocabulary for describing the general categories of scribal hands, and the illustrations of similarities in published articles on these identified hands have brought with them a false sense that such identification is now easy. Graduate students propose identifications based solely upon a few similar scribal habits, and scholars make bold statements about the number of hands in a manuscript or about the places where hands change – sometimes where the change is simply due to a change of ink or sharpening of a pen that alters the general appearance of the script. In the last six months I have come across a library's unpublished catalogue (made available to all readers of their manuscripts) and an unpublished article by reputable scholars in which claims have been made for there being two or three hands in a manuscript when I could detect but one. So while there are now better tools for making identifications, not all scholarly eyes have been trained to make them, and the tools we have developed over the last several

²⁷ A. I. Doyle, 'More Light on John Shirley', *Medium Aevum* 30 (1961), 93–5.

²⁸ A. F. Sutton and L. Visser-Fuchs, 'The Provenance of the Manuscript: The Lives and Archive of Sir Thomas Cook and his Man of Affairs, John Vale', in *The Politics of Fifteenth-Century England: John Vale's Book*, ed. M. L. Kekewich, C. Richmond, A. F. Sutton, L. Visser-Fuchs, and J. L. Watts (Stroud, 1995), pp. 107–12; Mooney, 'A New Manuscript by the Hammond Scribe', forthcoming.

²⁹ Mooney, 'Scribes and Booklets'.

decades are only aids to the process. One cannot restrict this scholarly activity to a few, but one wishes to keep erroneous identifications from publication and automatic acceptance, to avoid the kind of accepted and repeated error created by Bradshaw's misidentification in the last century. How to assist scholars to make accurate identifications, and how to correct the misidentifications, is a matter of concern to all who work in this field.

In the twenty-first century, we can tackle this problem on two fronts, parallel to the means by which we achieved the major gains in this field over the last fifty years. Just as photography and photoduplication made comparison of hands easier in the twentieth century, electronic digital imagery will make direct comparison of clearer images of hands still easier in the twenty-first century. We should establish an electronic archive of medieval and early modern English scribal hands, which could be made accessible to all scholars in the field through the world wide web. The archive would store digital images of scribal hands, with descriptions of the features by which each hand might be identified, written by experts in the field and keyed to the images by line, word or graph. At present many libraries are reluctant to allow digital images to be made of their manuscripts, but they might in future be persuaded to allow images of only a few illustrative pages, rather than of whole manuscripts. The archive might begin with images of the work of scribes of Chaucer's works and other major literary pieces, and of that of scribes whose hands have already been identified in more than one manuscript. Scholars experienced in this field would organize and describe the images, and the archive would be expanded under their supervision.

Second, just as Parkes' clear categorization and description of handwriting styles into *anglicana*, *secretary* etc. has moved forward our understanding of medieval English handwriting, and art historians including Kathleen Scott and Martha Driver have developed new vocabulary to describe illustrations and decorative details, so too a new vocabulary or new means of categorizing scribal styles is needed. In other words, since professional scribes were capable of writing in several fonts, *anglicana*, *textura*, *secretary* etc., it will be necessary to develop a schema for categorizing their handwriting that crosses these boundaries. Descriptions using these newly developed vocabularies and categories would be linked to the digital images in the archive.

At the New Chaucer Society conference in Dublin in 1994, I proposed that scholars should compile a collection of photographs of the work of Chaucer scribes in book form, keyed to descriptions that would point to idiosyncracies so that both literary scholars and historians working with manuscripts could identify other manuscripts written by Chaucer scribes in the course of their research.³⁰ I now believe that the new technology of digital images provides a

³⁰ Unpublished paper, 'Identity, Writings, and Patrons of the So-Called "Hammond Scribe"', Ninth International Congress of the New Chaucer Society, Trinity College, Dublin, 23-27 July 1994.

better medium for this archive. The comparison I made then, with Roger Tory Peterson's field guides to the birds, in which descriptions of the telling features for identification of species are keyed to illustrations of the birds, will apply still better to digital imagery. Using this technology, idiosyncratic elements of the handwriting that would allow us to identify a scribe's hand might be highlighted as the reader scanned the description; the scholar would then have an opportunity to view the image of the page either as it would appear in the manuscript, or with any of several idiosyncratic elements highlighted. To take a simple example, while scholars read the description of the idiosyncratic graph of the 'hooked-g' scribe, each of the graphs of that letter on the images would be highlighted. With such an archive readily available for scholarly reference, those not as comfortable with identifying hands might make preliminary identifications, just as amateur ornithologists now make identifications in the field thanks to Peterson's guides. In the future, the archive might be linked to other databases, for instance, of dialect features, of manuscript artists, or of paperstocks, to enable us to gather more information about scribes' origins or professional affiliations.

What could we achieve with such new tools for manuscript study? Our research over the last fifty years into the identity of late medieval English scribes has raised more hypotheses than it has delivered proven facts. We have identified a number of scribal hands, but with an archive for comparing thousands of manuscripts in a short space of time we might identify many more. We do not yet have a clear picture of the origins, training, careers or places of employment for non-monastic scribes. Did they come out of monastic backgrounds? Were they university-trained? Were they apprenticed and trained by the government bureaucracy in Chancery, the Privy Seal office, the Wardrobe etc.? Did they begin their careers as clerks in noble houses? Were they authors and translators as well as copyists? We have some evidence to suggest any of these career patterns, and also some to suggest that the boundaries between them were quite fluid, such that scribes might change from one line of work or one place of business to another in the course of a forty-year career. There is also evidence to suggest that, by the second half of the fifteenth century, the work of scribes was somehow connected to the work taking place in stationers' shops and then printshops. When we know more about the scribes who copied the manuscripts of late medieval England, about the number and variety of the texts they copied, about their origins, training, careers, patrons and places of employment, we shall have learned more about that intellectual class, the cultural middle-class intelligentsia of late medieval England, who so well preserved for posterity their literary heritage.

Manuscript Production in Medieval Theatre: The German Carnival Plays

ECKEHARD SIMON

If you were fortunate enough to be living in the city of Lübeck between 1430 and 1540, then in its glory days as queen of the Hanseatic League, you could have witnessed the performance of about two hundred carnival plays. Some were the usual kind, called *Einkehrspiele*, that young men put on in many German towns. In a medieval form of home invasion, costumed mummers would go from house to house and perform brief sketches before carnival revelers gathered in a large room. In Lübeck, most players were choristers from the four church schools, making the rounds in groups of two to six, often led by their teachers. Their playlets dramatized traditional comic themes: the wicked old hag, the widow too easily comforted, here comes the judge, the marriage game. These plays, some eighty in number, have all been lost. We know about them because one carnival theatre stop was the clubhouse of a merchant confraternity – called *Greveradenkompanie* after its founder – whose stewards recorded the tips paid out to carnival ‘rhymers’ (*rymers*), as they refer to them, in the company book of 1495 to 1539 that happens to survive.

That the hand of time is hard on light student sketches is perhaps not surprising. But in Lübeck, carnival playmaking was also the concern of men who governed the largest and most powerful north German city and ran its trading economy, its merchants and administrators. They socialized and protected their interests in two elite confraternities. The old money belonged to the Squire Company or Confraternity of the *Zirkel*, meaning ‘compass’, an emblem symbolic of the Trinity. The new rich who hoped to become Squires one day joined the Merchant Company. Both confraternities produced carnival plays and staged them on wagons drawn to the marketplace. As merchants fond of double-entry bookkeeping, they took care to record the rules governing their holiday meetings throughout the year, heavy on drinking and feasting, and the activities in which the brothers engaged. These ordinances, especially the Merchant Company customary of 1500, are of great value to theatre historians. Nowhere else in pre-Reformation Europe can one reconstruct carnival theatre with the same wealth of organizational details as in Lübeck.

The confraternity stewards appointed four carnival playwrights or playmakers at Christmas. They had about six weeks to write the play. They could either do this on their own or hire local ghost writers. About a week before Carnival Sunday, the playmakers gave part sheets to the brothers whom they had tapped to act in the play. The actors had only a week to memorize their lines. The playmakers also prepared a manuscript containing the entire play. Merchant Company rules required one of the playmakers to read the play aloud to the confraternity elders and ask whether they wished to change the script in any way. The presumably fairly short plays were staged on wagons in the early afternoons of Carnival Sunday, Monday and Tuesday.

For seventy-four years, starting in 1430, the *Zirkel* Company stewards recorded the surprisingly literate and often serious subjects of their annual plays: episodes from late chivalric romances, heroic and beast epics, histories of Troy, Alexander and Charlemagne, moral tales and proverbs. Unique to early German theatre was a corpus of twenty-two moralities or moral plays, some with a political message. The Squire Confraternity, to which belonged most of Lübeck's city councilors and mayors, used theatre as a medium of social instruction and political control. Their carnival theatre was topical and could react to current events. In March 1500, two weeks after it happened, the Squires took delight in satirizing the defeat free Frisian farmers inflicted on a mercenary army, a cabaret piece that was to involve Lübeck in a diplomatic row with the king of Denmark.

Together the two confraternities must have performed, in marketplace double features, a total of about 120 plays. Of these, only the moral play of 1484 survives. Illustrating it with woodcuts, the Lübeck Poppy Head printer, recently identified as Hans van Ghetelen, issues it some two decades after the performance as a tract (338 verses) for edifying reading. Prompted by their dying father and led by the wise fool Littlejohn (Henselyn), three sons set out to find justice or righteousness among the various estates, from Pope to peasant, only to discover it in their own hearts.¹

The loss of the Lübeck repertory is not unique. Expense, infraction, permit and chronicle records show that some fifty German, Swiss and Austrian towns staged carnival plays of various kinds, both funny and serious, in houses, taverns, town halls and outdoors in the marketplace. Yet play texts survive, with scattered exceptions, only from Nuremberg and the Tirol. The same holds true for religious theatre. The roughly four thousand performance records Bernd Neumann published in 1987 reveal that most German

¹ E. Simon, 'Organizing and Staging Carnival Plays in Late Medieval Lübeck', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 92 (1993), 57–72; 'Die Lübecker Fastnachtspiele (1430–1523)', in *Jeux de Carnaval et Fastnachtspiele*, ed. D. Buschinger and W. Spiewok, Wodan: Greifswälder Beiträge zum Mittelalter 40 (Greifswald, 1994), pp. 153–63; 'Das Schauspiel der Lübecker Fastnacht', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 116 (1997), Sonderheft, 208–23; 'The Moral Plays of Lübeck', in *History and Literature: Essays in Honor of Karl S. Guthke*, ed. W. Donahue and S. Denham (Tübingen, 2000), in press.

religious plays have not come down to us.² The Toronto project *Records of Early English Drama*, gathered by a faithful platoon of archive sleuths led by Alexandra Johnston, demonstrates with every volume that the play manuscripts we have are but a pitiful remnant of what was actually staged. There was theatre in virtually every English town. The whole history of early English theatre needs to be re-written. Once the records are available, the same will have to be done for France and Germany. Between 1300 and 1650, church, town and university theatre was a mass medium of extraordinary importance. Yet no form of text transmission suffered more extensive losses than the manuscripts produced for medieval theatre.

Why is this the case? What accounts for the ephemeral nature of medieval play scripts? Why and for what purpose were they written? Who wrote plays down and for whom? How do theatre manuscripts differ from the ordinary codices medieval scriptoria produced? Given such vast losses, why did some play manuscripts survive? Why do we have a whole text corpus from cities like Nuremberg but nothing from others, like Lübeck? The study to follow tries to provide some answers. I begin with brief general considerations. I then examine some manuscripts of German carnival plays, at times with the help of facsimiles depicted in the illustrations.

Medieval plays were not drama to be read and preserved in perpetuity, they were not dramatic literature as we understand the term. They were, like opera libretti or today's screen plays, performance scripts. The priests, town clerks, teachers and confraternity brothers who were asked to compose plays wrote them directly for performance. Plays were meant to be heard and seen, not read. Manuscripts containing a clean copy were often written after the performance and served as working copies for future performances. Some eventually found their way into someone's library. Other play texts were revised, copied for readers and then read for generations. But most, like part sheets and play-director's manuals, were used up in the process of producing a play and have vanished.

The 'original' of a medieval play is not a text, as the philologist in us wishes to believe. The original was the performance itself. All subsequent performances produced new originals, not a happy thought for editors. Graham Runnalls has done exemplary work examining, on site, all surviving manuscripts of medieval French religious plays and classifying them according to the use for which they were written.³ He notes that it is rare for a medieval

² B. Neumann, *Geistliches Schauspiel im Zeugnis der Zeit: Zur Aufführung mittelalterlicher Dramen im deutschen Sprachgebiet*, 2 vols., *Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters* 84 and 85 (Munich, 1987).

³ G. A. Runnalls, 'Toward a Typology of Medieval French Play Manuscripts', in *The Editor and the Text: In Honor of Professor Anthony J. Holden*, ed. P. E. Bennett and G. A. Runnalls (Edinburgh, 1990), pp. 96–113, repr. in G. A. Runnalls, *Études sur les mystères* (Paris, 1998), pp. 367–89. See also E. Lalou and D. Smith, 'Pour une typologie des manuscrits de théâtre médiéval', *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 13 (1988), 569–79.

play to be preserved in more than one manuscript (p. 96). In contrast to literary, historical and scientific writings, medieval play texts were not meant to circulate and often did not. Patrons, therefore, did not serve their usual function as disseminators of texts. Most play manuscripts were written in secretary hands or chancery cursives, not in the stately bookhands patrons would demand. They were sparingly rubricated and, with notable exceptions, rarely illustrated.

In a comprehensive 1988 article, Hansjürgen Linke examines the various types and characteristic features of German play manuscripts.⁴ With the help of forty reproduced pages, Linke looks for clues to indicate whether a given manuscript was used in performance or was meant to be read. He notes that even manuscripts clearly aimed at readers often contain performance texts, that is scripts originally used in stage productions. I will refer to Linke's work as I look at carnival play manuscripts in the three brief studies to follow. In examining the two oldest plays, in the first study, we will see that writing down carnival interludes was often little more than happenstance. The second study examines manuscripts that were used in staging or were close to the production process. We have the texts of about 120 carnival plays written before 1500. Of these, 110 come from Nuremberg. Municipal records show, however, that carnival plays were staged, as noted, in about fifty German towns. The third study tries to explain why Nuremberg plays survive in such great numbers.

**Chance entries: the St Paul (Swabian) Neidhart Play,
the Low German carnival play
'Septem mulieres: Seven Women and One Man'**

The St Paul (Swabian) Neidhart Play, a playlet of fifty-eight spoken verses, survives in a collection of originally separate formularies, containing model letters and charters, owned by the Benedictine abbey of St Paul in Carinthia, Austria.⁵ The charters preceding and following the play text were executed in Schwäbisch Gmünd (east of Stuttgart). The secretary or chancery cursive suggests that the play was written down by a notary scribe in this Swabian town. He wrote on paper produced in northern Italy (German paper mills were just starting to operate at that time). The watermark dating matches the dates left standing in some of the charter copies this originally unbound fascicle contains, whose sheets are somewhat smaller than those of the other

⁴ H. Linke, 'Versuch über deutsche Handschriften mittelalterlicher Spiele', in *Deutsche Handschriften 1100–1400: Oxforder Kolloquium 1985*, ed. V. Honemann and N. F. Palmer (Tübingen, 1988), pp. 527–89.

⁵ Benediktinerstift St Paul, Carinthia, Austria, Codex 261/4, fol. 37ra–va (new foliation 166).

formularies. The scribe must have added the play text to the existing formulary around 1367.

What is a Neidhart play? Nameless imitators of the court poet Neidhart, who died about 1240, turned their literary idol into the crafty knight Sir Neidhart who, as their sworn enemy, spends his life fighting and duping peasants. The Swabian Neidhart play dramatizes a ballad in which the peasants trick Sir Neidhart. The duchess of Austria, at whose court Neidhart sings, promises to make him her lover for rest of the year if he, in the meadows, finds the first violet, harbinger of spring. This most improbable notion is best explained as a pastiche of the May bride ritual of popular custom. After Neidhart discovers the flower, he happily drops his hat over it to mark the spot. But the peasants have been watching him. One of them plucks the violet and defecates in its place. After Neidhart escorts the duchess and her ladies to the would-be violet, the duchess, aghast at the sight, banishes Neidhart from court who, in turn, slices a leg off the offending rustic. Later plays add episodes, likewise preserved as ballads, in which Neidhart further avenges himself by duping the peasants with nasty tricks.

The Neidhart play is the only literary text in the formulary. Nothing links the text to a performance. The scribe hid it, as it were, in the center bifolium of a quire preceded and followed by model charters. Writing in double columns is not functional for a text to be used in staging; single column scripting is the rule. We can only speculate why the scribe copied this text. Perhaps he and his friends (carnival plays were staged by young townsmen) had put on this play in Schwäbisch Gmünd and our scribe wished to store it for a future performance. A similar chance entry preserved for us the play 'Septem mulieres', also dating from the last quarter of the fourteenth century.

Like the Neidhart play, 'Septem mulieres: Sieben Frauen und ein Mann' (Keller 122)⁶ is a short interlude of 66 spoken verses. An unknown hand, also using a secretary cursive, wrote this play onto the inside of the back cover of an *Antidotarium*, a collection of recipes and instructions in Latin for preparing medications and antidotes.⁷ Only this thick vellum cover sheet, heavily stained and damaged, survives today. The *Antidotarium* went missing before or after the former Prussian State Library acquired the codex in the 1850s. Karin Schneider of the Bavarian State Library in Munich, on whose paleographical expertise many of us depend, dates the secretary cursive, 'with certainty', to the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Because this page was all he had, our man saved space by writing two verses to the line. He marked the beginning of each speech with the *capitulum* sign and wrote the Latin stage directions, in tiny, highly abbreviated script, into the left margin. Because the margin lay over the book's spine, the rubrics have

⁶ *Fastnachtspiele aus dem 15. Jahrhundert*, ed. A. von Keller, vol. 4, Bibliothek des Litterarischen Vereins 46 (Stuttgart, 1858), pp. 14–16 and 332–3.

⁷ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, MS germ. qu. 671, fol. 2r.

become virtually illegible. Only recent examination of the manuscript identified the text as a stage play.⁸

'Septem mulieres' dramatizes, in carnivalesque fashion, what the prophet Isaiah (4. 1) says about the women of Jerusalem. With men killed in war, the women resort to desperate measures to win husbands. 'And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach."' With 'reproach', they are referring to the words with which the Lord, quoth Isaiah, had castigated the haughty daughters of Zion in the preceding chapter (3. 16) who, he thundered, 'walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet . . .'. This is surely a description to stir the imagination of a carnival playwright who knew that, in performance, the women would be played by lascivious young males. What would happen if seven young women tried to persuade a single lucky man to marry them? The result is the first German carnival play known to us.

Antidotaria were owned by physicians, apothecaries, medical schools instructors and their students.⁹ While it was perhaps a physician or apothecary who wrote down the play, it is unlikely that he was the one who dramatized Isaiah 4. 1. The text exhibits a curious mixture of Low, High and East Middle German dialect forms. The rhyme phonology shows that the playwright spoke Low German. The text we have is several steps removed from the original and thus, I suspect, from the performance setting. Like the play in the St Paul formulary, this book-cover fill-in is not a performance script. The fact that the first two texts we have survived by chance suggests that most early carnival plays did not find their way into manuscripts.

Manuscripts written for performance

Linke (1988, p. 531 n. 13) lists more than a dozen part sheets actors used when preparing for and performing in religious plays. Next to the lines the actor had to memorize, the part sheets sometimes give, as cue, the last verse of the preceding speaker and directives (such as horizontal lines in French sheets) reminding the actor when and where to move. The Lübeck confraternity regulations show that part sheets were also written out for the young merchants putting on carnival plays. Yet from carnival theatricals only one part sheet survives. This single sheet, dated to 1460–1470, was found loose inside a Latin tome holding the *Quaestiones* on canon law by Frederick de

⁸ E. Simon, "'Sieben Frauen und ein Mann'" (Keller 122): Das älteste Fastnachtspiel (c. 1375–1400)', in *Ritual und Inszenierung: Geistliches und weltliches Drama des Mittelalters*, ed. H. Ziegeler (Tübingen, 2001), in press.

⁹ G. Keil, 'Antidotarium Nicolai', 'Arzneibücher', in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. 1 (Zurich, 1981), cols. 708–10 and 1091–4.

Senis, compiled in 1411 and owned until 1812 by the collegiate church in Glogau, formerly Silesia, now Głogów, Poland.¹⁰ Written in a fairly sloppy cursive, this sheet contains 129 verses, with directions in Latin, to be spoken by the prologue, called herald or precursor, of a carnival play. His was the usual task: to speak the prologue and the epilogue (*conclusio*). The play itself is lost. Judging from the dialect, it could have been performed in Glogau, or, more likely, in the former German town of Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland) to the southeast.¹¹ The subject is familiar from the Nuremberg plays. A mother steps forward to offer her beautiful daughter in marriage. To the auction come four suitors: a peasant, a knight, a monk and a clerk or scribe. Scribes have soft hands and a way with words. It is therefore not surprising that the daughter decides to marry the *schreyber*.

The part is written on a paper sheet 31 cm high but only 10.5 cm wide. This format is common to part sheets and is easily produced by cutting a folio sheet in half. The verso text is scripted upside down. This reveals how the part sheet was meant to work. After the herald read the verses in front, he then turned the bottom side over, perhaps with a theatrical gesture, and continued reading the prologue on the back. Grease and dirt spots on the top and bottom show that the sheet was actually used that way in performance. This format would not work, of course, for an actor who had hundreds of lines to speak. Examining part sheets used to stage French moralities and farces, Graham Runnalls finds that most of them consisted of strips of narrow sheets of paper glued, sewn or pinned together, nailed to wooden sticks and rolled up on them.¹² As the actor read his verses, he would slowly unwind the scroll. This format accommodated parts of different length. But the text could be written on one side only. Runnalls mentions only one French 'rôle' scripted like the Breslau part sheet: the lines of Pécché from an early sixteenth-century morality play, probably from Rouen, end upside down on the back of the roll (p. 10 n. 15, p. 58 n. 1).

In describing the part sheets for religious plays, Linke concludes that the actors used them to memorize their lines (1988, p. 532). One wonders whether this would justify the labor and expense of making part sheets, especially the scrolls Runnalls reconstructed. They were surely meant to be displayed. Perhaps these actors, mostly lay people, not averse to short cuts, preferred reading their lines on stage. Or at least, they held part sheets in their hands just in case they forgot their lines.

¹⁰ Wrocław (formerly Breslau), Bibliotheka Uniwersytecka, IV F 311. The de Senis codex is II F 60.

¹¹ O. Günther, 'Ein Bruchstück aus einem unbekannten Fastnachtspiel des 15. Jahrhunderts. Aus einer Breslauer Handschrift mitgeteilt . . .', *Mitteilungen der Schlesischen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde* 26 (1925), 189–96; W. Jungandreas, 'Die Mundart des Breslauer Fastnachtspielbruchstücks', 196–9.

¹² G. A. Runnalls, 'The Medieval Actors' Rôles Found in the Fribourg Archive', *pluteus* 4/5 (1986/87, published 1990), 5–67 (pp. 7–9).

Visual evidence shows that the director of a medieval play did not hide sidestage or behind the camera. Like an orchestra conductor, he stood on the open stage, holding the script in one hand and cueing actors and musicians with a baton held in the other. Such director's copies are another manuscript type surviving from medieval theatre productions, but not in great numbers. Runnalls describes only one directing manuscript for French drama (1990, p. 106), the *livre de conduite du régisseur* for the Passion play staged in 1501 in the town of Mons. The *abregiet*, as he calls it, centers the spoken verses on the page, giving only the first and last line of every speech, together with a number stating the line total. This leaves the margins free for the names of the characters, written in enlarged script, the names of the townspeople playing the parts in 1501 and staging directions that are more elaborate than those in the main playbook. Linke lists directing manuals for five German religious plays (1988, pp. 530–1). The most famous of these is the *Frankfurter Dirigierrolle*, a vellum scroll for the Frankfurt Passion play as staged in the Römer marketplace about 1330. More than four meters long, it was rolled up on wooden sticks affixed to both ends.

For plays staged during carnival, only one director's manual survives, a small paper booklet for a Neidhart play performed in South Tirol. Working around 1511 in Bozen (now Bolzano, Italy), the scribe produced, at the same time and on the same paper, a sister booklet containing the full text of this Neidhart play, called the 'medium-length' or *Mittlere* Tirolean Neidhart play. The Neidhart plays of Tirol were a unique form of carnival theatre. Like a religious play, this Neidhart play was staged outdoors on a place-and-scaffolds stage, fenced in by wooden barriers behind which stood the spectators, as they would when watching a tournament. Both booklets were once part of the play collection of Vigil Raber of Sterzing (now Vipiteno, Italy), just across the Brenner Pass in South Tirol, a province that became part of Italy in 1918. I return to Raber below.

The directing manual known as *Neidhart-Szenar*¹³ gives through its layout clues to the way it functioned as a directing script (see Plate 1). The director could orient himself quickly by glancing at the left third of the page which contains the names of the speakers and very short versions of the stage directions. They appear in their full wording on the right half of the page. Spanning the entire writing space are the first couplets of each speech plus the beginning of the third verse. The scribe also folded each page twice, giving him (or rather: the director) three distinct vertical sections.¹⁴ The scribe wrote out only two speeches in full: the prologue and the epilogue to be recited by the first of two precursors the play requires. This suggests that the person directing the play was expected to play the part of the first presenter.

¹³ Sterzing/Vipiteno, Archiv der Stadtgemeinde, Hs. 25.

¹⁴ H. Linke, 'Das Tiroler (Mittlere) Neidhartspiel und seine Dirigierrolle', *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 222 (1985), 1–21 (p. 20).

This would make sense for a director who would be standing on stage anyway. Since he had the script in his hands, he would, like actors holding part sheets, be able to read the verses without *having* to commit them to memory.

No other group of German play manuscripts gives us a better impression of how they functioned in theatre productions than the carnival play booklets once owned by Vigil Raber of Sterzing (c. 1480–1552). Raber made his living in the decorative arts, mainly as painter. But his calling was to the theatre. First to personify the peculiarly Austrian passion for the stage, Raber acted in plays, organized, produced and directed them, not only in Sterzing, but in various Tirolean towns as far south as Trent. As theatre impresario, he amassed, in a lifetime of gathering and copying, the largest play collection (over fifty-eight manuscripts) known to have been assembled in early modern Europe. After Raber died in 1552, the mayor of Sterzing bought the collection, which included costumes and props, from his widow for a bargain price and put it into the town hall where it is kept today. Until 1522, Raber appears to have worked mainly in Bozen/Bolzano, the district capital south of Sterzing. Between 1510 and 1535, Raber wrote an extant total of twenty-one carnival play booklets for his collection. Writing such booklets, narrow octavo in format, was not a lengthy process. As the town of Bozen was approaching carnival, on Sunday and Monday, 5 and 6 February 1510, Raber managed to copy two plays into one booklet, dating it in the *explicit*.¹⁵ In this and other early scripts, Raber insisted on writing titles, stage directions (red ink) and colophons in Latin although the plays were usually produced by common town folk. As son of a Sterzing baker, Raber had little formal education and his Latin must be described as barbarously charming.

Raber charged players a fee to use his booklets or lent them, for a price, to other play directors to copy out texts. On the cover, usually a paper sheet, he writes a short play title and the year he copies it, placing the number, as an artist would, between his initials. He enters a longer title on the top of the first page where the text begins. On the last page, he records the total number of rhymed couplets (not single verses) the play contains, dates the copy and gives the name of the town (mostly Bozen) where he is writing it. In some booklets, Raber – or other play directors – list, usually at the end, the cast of characters and count out (right) and total (left) the lines each has to speak (see Plate 2). In the example pictured here the precursor speaks 26 verses and Rumpold 103. Titled *Der verstossene Rumpold*, or roughly ‘Rumpold in the Dog House’, this play was meant to be performed at the many weddings held before or during carnival (the church frowned on sex during Lent). Adelhait spurns her new husband, the peasant Rumpold, because she chooses to

¹⁵ ‘Dominica secunda f[eria] in dy agate et dorote scriptum illy duo ludy Anno decimo.’ See *Sterzinger Spiele: Die weltlichen Spiele des Sterzinger Spielarchivs nach den Originalhandschriften (1510–1535) von Vigil Raber*, ed. W. M. Bauer, Wiener Neudrucke 6 (Vienna, 1982), p. 328.

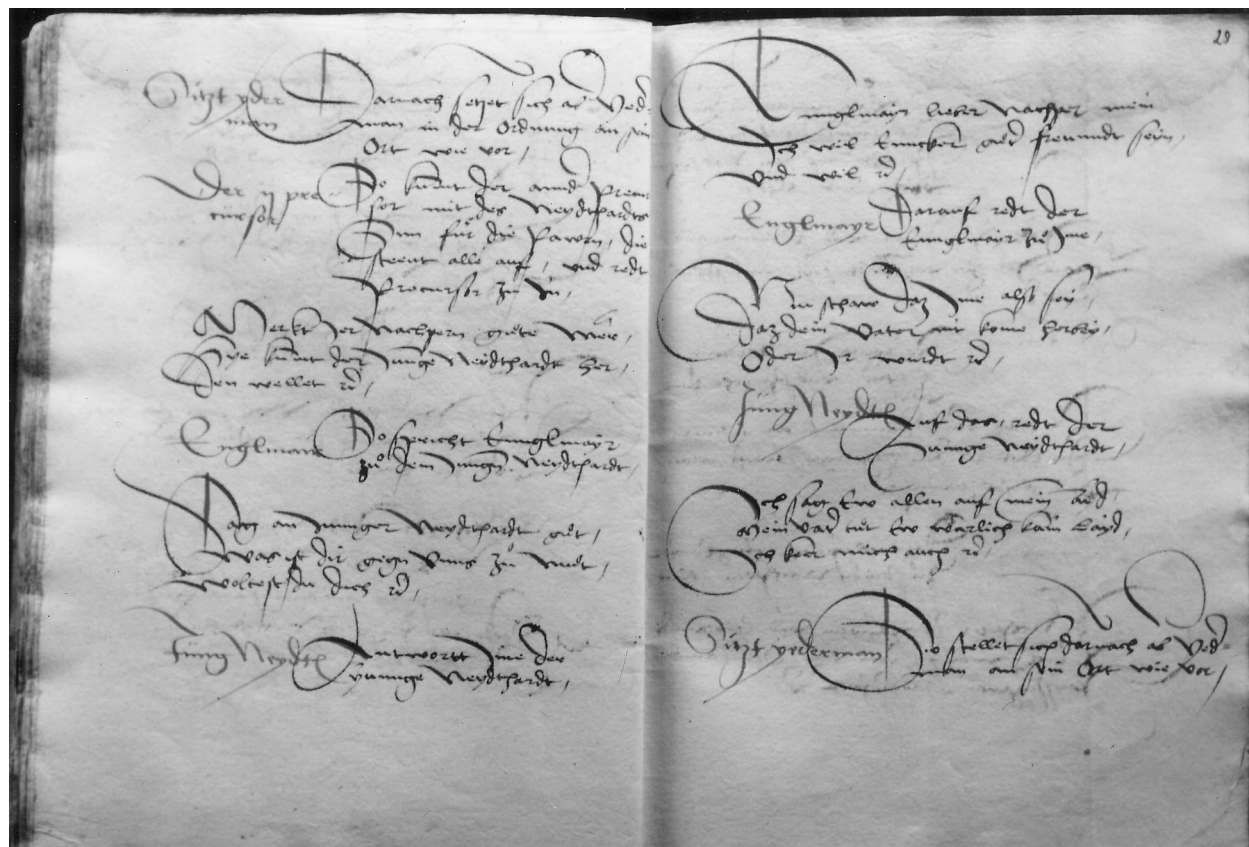


Plate 1 'Tiroler Neidhart-Szenar,' Director's script for the Tirolean Neidhart Play. Sterzing/Vitipeno, Archiv der Gemeinde, Ms. 25, c. 1511, fols. 19v–20r. Published with permission of the Archiv.

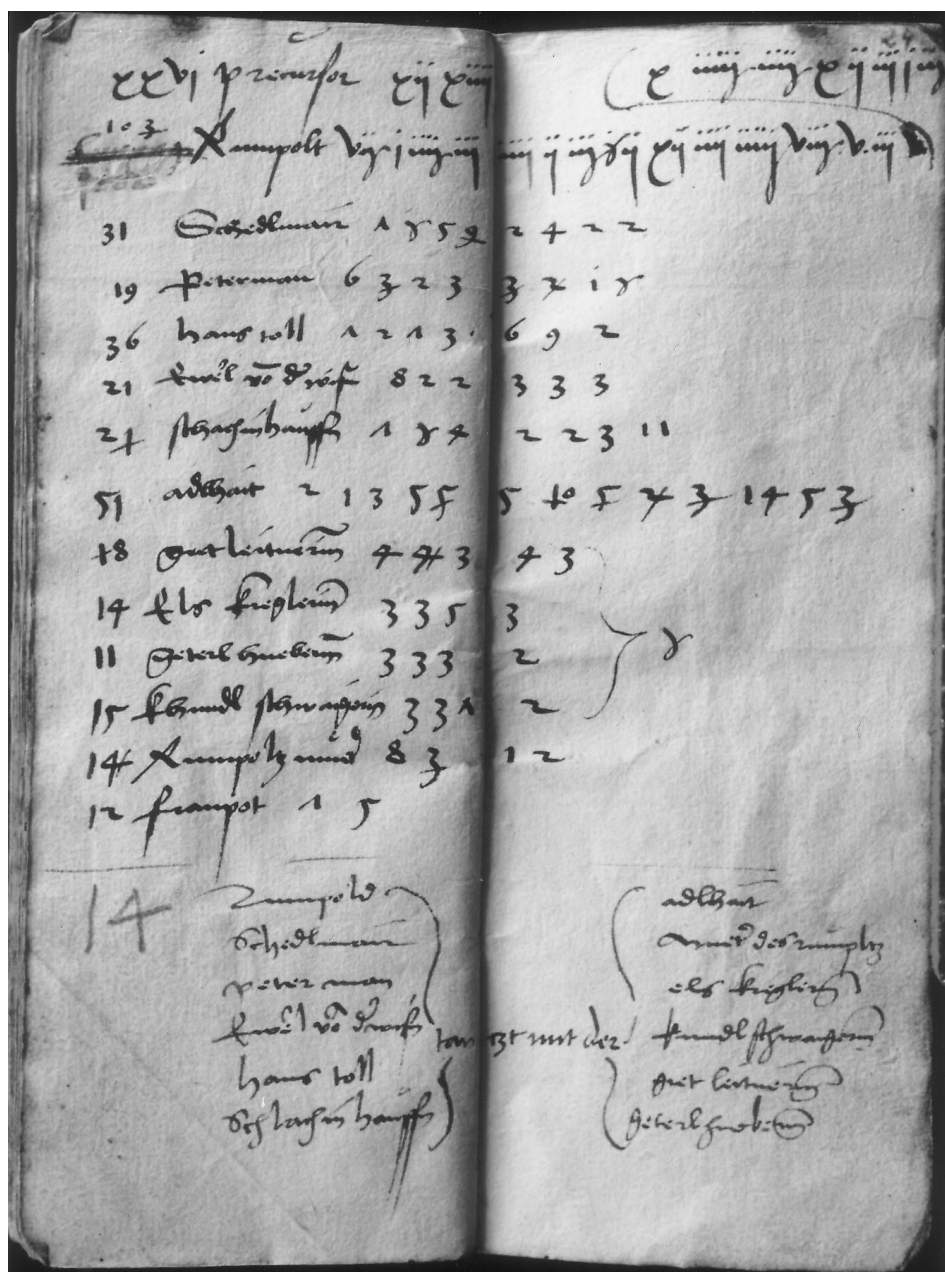


Plate 2 Vigil Raber: 'Der verstossene Rumpold' ('Rumpold in the Dog House').
 Sterzing/Vitipeno, Archiv der Gemeinde, MS 15, 1512, fols. 23v-24r. Published
 with permission of the Archiv.

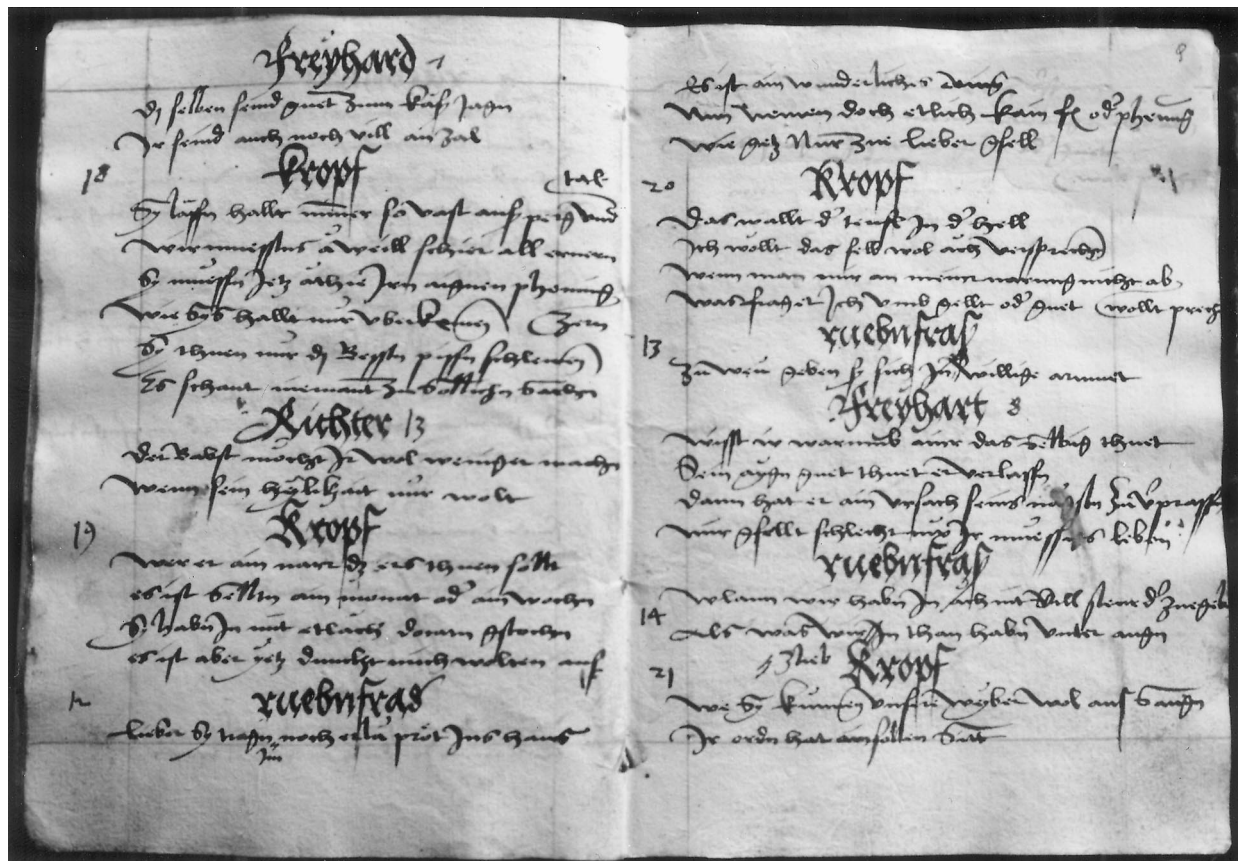


Plate 3 Reformation Carnival Play, 'Die zwen Stenndt' ('The Two Estates'), Ms. B. Sterzing/Vitipeno, Archiv der Gemeinde, Ms. 23, 1535, fols. 8v–9r. Published with permission of the Archiv.

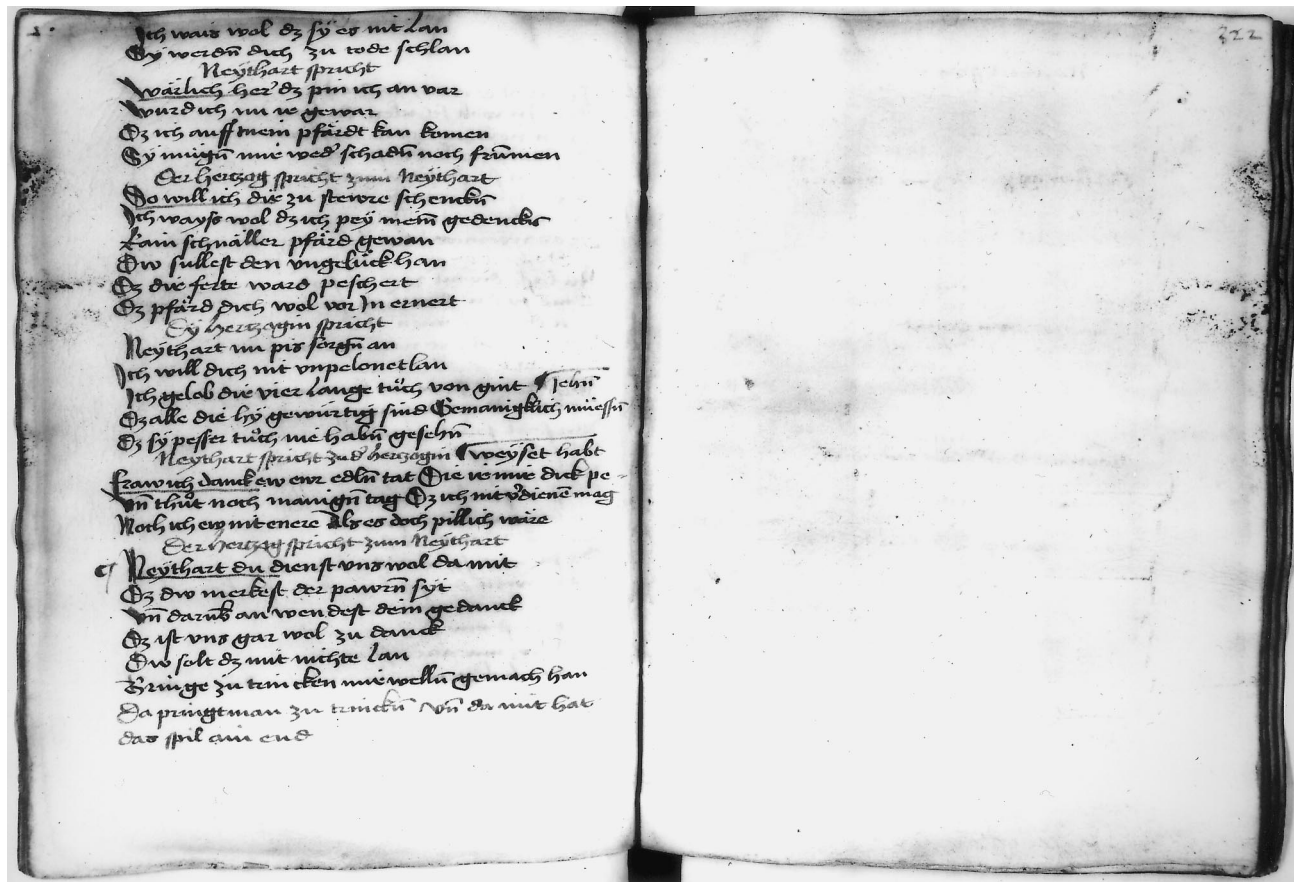


Plate 4 'Tiroler (Grosses) Neidhartspiel' ('The Large Tirolean Neidhart Play'). Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, cod. 18.12 Aug 4° (see table under G), c. 1492/93, fols. 321v–322r. Published with permission of the Herzog August Bibliothek.

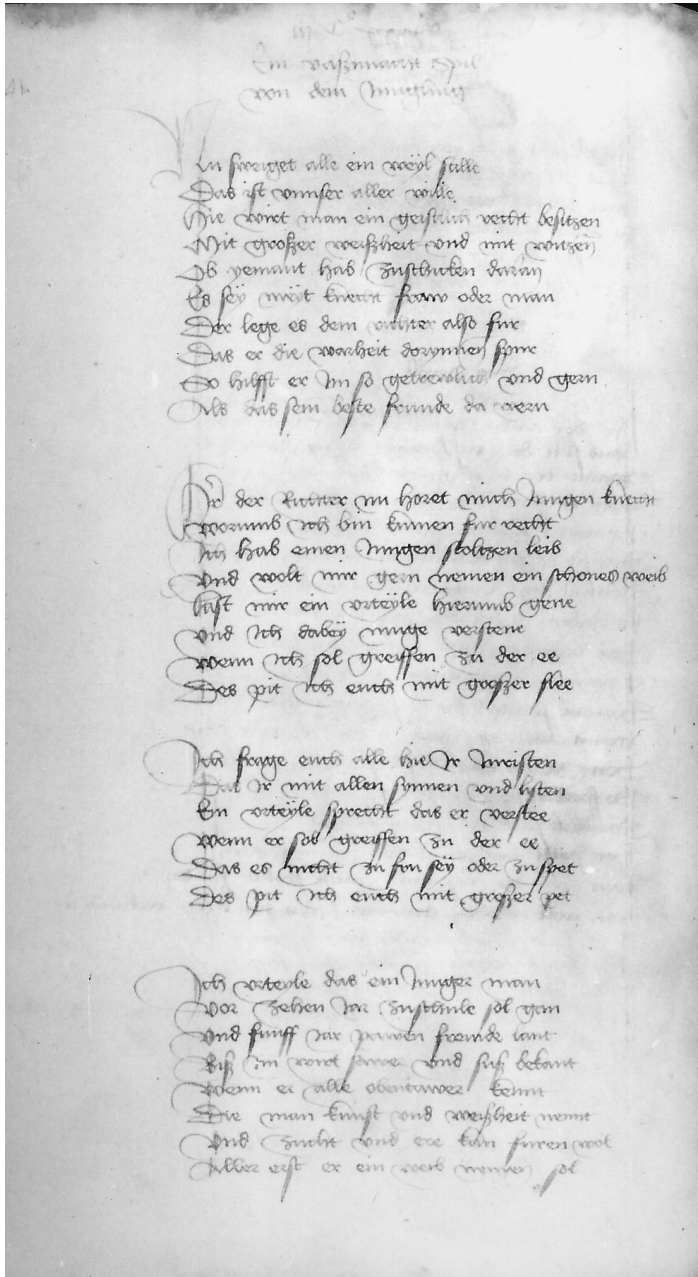


Plate 5 Nuremberg Carnival Play 'When to Marry,' Reading Copy Without Stage Directions. Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, M 50 (Ms. D), c. 1460–62, fol. 170v. Published with permission of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek.

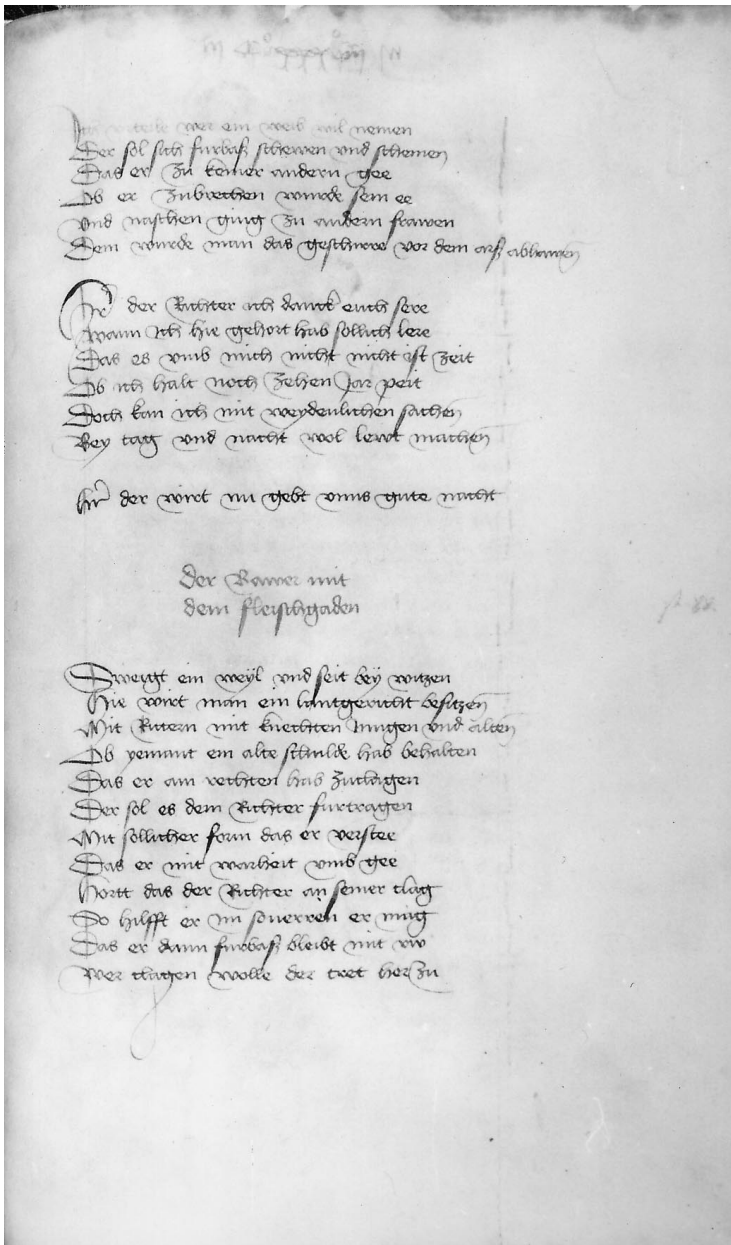


Plate 6 Nuremberg Carnival Play 'When to Marry', Epilogue Shortened to One Line. Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, M 50 (Ms. D), c. 1460–62, fol. 172r. Published with permission of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek.

Ich gult in den anliggen finger
 Den viert man nennet von dem parhen
 Und wet darauß ein ley geysel machen
 Der murreniger sein die murren
 T Ruchter und schafften hort meine wort
 Ich hab weder gezaucht noch gaudet
 Darum man mir thū an meinem lab
 Ob ich geschmilt hab mit am weib
 Ich arbeiter heuße in der hie se geß
 Das ich mich must auß ziehen macher plos
 Do sach sie mir do an mein hingen
 Die frau kam pils in mir gessungen
 Die zu sayh mir das pauch pauten
 Und lach mich da zimsthen zu dani
 Und gab dem frauen das gauden
 Das sie von mir hat begret
 Darum Gott ich zu recht und recht
 Ich sey in nichtig schuldig an dem frau
 Der recht der frucht den rüchungecht
 T Die haben gabel von geseßgen
 Ich thu dich das rechtan sagen
 Und thu an vachtes veteil pauten
 Das du behalten mußt dem Nuren
 T Ich sprach an vteil zu der fast zivungehobst
 Was sein hezu als vnter ist

Und qui Weib wart zu der kinnen
 Das sie nicht tut melken oder pyren
 So sol man den sellen gefellen
 Wren an den marcket stellen
 Et sol mit einem anliggen finger macher stan
 Die frauen sollen wachschlaß trecken dach
 Und die lach sollen dach vachmen
 So wart es keme mit zu der kinnen
 Darum frucht der zofme dem Orwungzupf
 T Darumf sagel von schlingen
 Gib auch dem vteil in dem dungen
 Und du setzen dach von dem pauten
 Von magendach gach vte zu
 Und gebt auch vteil gauden
 Das man auch milt die Nuren auß stunde
 Orwungzupf frucht
 T Ich schenck sagel ein am keme
 Dem vteil sag ich schlicht und recht
 Man sol in auß weffen sein Nuren
 Und sol die geben der kinn dach
 Das dachet mich gar wol gauden
 Man lach die milt die Nuren pauten
 Und gebt sie dem melken fast zu essen
 T So wart es keme vachmen
 So mag es schenck schenck

Plate 7 Claus Spaun (Augsburg, c. 1494) adds Rubrics to a Nuremberg Carnival Play (c. 1485). Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, cod. 18.12 Aug 4° (G), fols. 66v–67r. Published with permission of the Herzog August Bibliothek.

believe her women friends who consider a husband inadequate who does not perform his marital duty at least four times a night. The couples eventually reconcile with a dance. Raber therefore carefully notes which male character is to partner up with which woman. Since men cross-dressed to play women, such closing dances were no less comic than the play.

Other marks of the production process appear in the play texts themselves. In booklet B of the serious carnival play *Die zwen Stenndt*, or 'The Two Estates', written in 1532, in which tavern patrons argue about the Reformation, a hand (perhaps Raber's) numbers the speeches consecutively. Thus on fols. 8v–9r (Plate 3), a character named Kropf makes a point for the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first time. As Linke notes (1988, p. 539), a director was here numbering the speeches probably in order to copy them out onto part sheets. Between the pages of some booklets one finds small slips of paper giving alternative stage directions for the same scene (Bauer, p. 71) or alternative verses (Bauer, p. 263). Carnival plays, like cabaret shows, were topical and drew spectators into the play. One way to do this was to insert names everyone in town knew. Thus in several lines Raber writes *N.* (for *nomen*), expecting the play director to supply names: the name of the tavern where the glutton *Lernpecher* is to drink and feast (p. 33); the name of a vile servant (p. 377); the name of a lover whose house a peasant wife is fond of visiting (p. 415); the name of the house owner where the troupe is performing the play (p. 479).

Vigil Raber was not a playwright, although he was not averse to adding lines to rôles he chose to play. But he did revise the plays he was able to obtain, often in the process of copying them. Twelve carnival plays depend wholly or partly on plays written in the carnival metropolis of Nuremberg that we are about to visit. Aside from changing names to fit the Tirolean geography and substituting words from the local dialect, Raber enlarged many speaking parts, often adding lively give-and-take exchanges.¹⁶ Two of the plays Raber adapted (Bauer III, 3 and V, 8) were written by Hans Folz of Nuremberg who, in the 1480s, printed his plays in his own shop. Nuremberg printers re-issued Folz imprints for decades. When, in 1516, Raber copied these Folz plays in Bozen, he was most likely drawing on such printed booklets. Bozen was the southern terminal of the great Brenner Pass highway starting in Innsbruck over which Nuremberg and Augsburg merchants shipped their goods to Italy. This was probably the way printed and handwritten carnival play booklets reached Bozen. There was also return manuscript traffic. Some time before 1494, the Augsburg merchant Claus Spaun, whom we are about to meet as compiler and owner of MS G, got hold of a collection of nine plays written in the Tirol (six carnival plays, three religious plays), divided it and had the

¹⁶ E. Catholy, 'Das Tiroler Fastnachtspiel: Plagiat der Nürnberger Spiele?', in *Tiroler Volksschauspiel: Beiträge zur Theatergeschichte des Alpenraumes*, ed. E. Kùhebacher (Bozen, 1976), 60–73 (pp. 62–3).

fascicles bound into two of his collections. He was able to do this because the Tirolean scribe ends each play text at the quire. The last page of the Large Tirolean Neidhart play (Plate 4) shows how he writes two verses on one line in order to squeeze the text into the quire and leave the last sheet blank to serve as back cover. Plays were commonly sold in unbound single booklets, especially, as we are about to learn, in Nuremberg.

Why do nearly all carnival plays come from Nuremberg?

We have the texts of about 120 carnival plays written before 1500. Of these 110 come to us from Nuremberg. Leaving a few peripheral sources aside, they are transmitted in twelve manuscripts, written between 1455 and 1494, all of them, more or less definitely, produced in Nuremberg. The number of play texts they contain ranges from one (N, R, H) to sixty-six (G). Why did carnival plays enter the manuscript production process in Nuremberg when in fifty or so other German towns they remained manifestly outside or below the literary horizon? Why and how did Nuremberg plays make their way into writing shops? To suggest some answers, I tabulate, in chronological order, the twelve codices relevant to this discussion.¹⁷

- M Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 714, c. 1455–8, 495 fols., two professional scribes working together. Once owned by the middle class townsman Michel Geyswurgel (d. 1496). In parts 2 (fols. 289–366) and 3 (367–490) 50 carnival plays. In his table of contents (fol. 1r) the scribe distinguishes *vasnachtspil* from *spruch*. These 46 *Sprüche* in part 1 (1–288) are: verse tales (fabliaux), didactic verse *dits* on love (*Minnereden*), the world and religion (Hans Rosenplüt, der Teichner), Marian poems and fables.
- K Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. 76. 3 Aug. 2^o, c. 1460. 2 originally separate parts. In part 2, 14 plays (fols. 108–89, 191–9), entered by two professional scribes, working in same shop. Other texts: part 1: fables; part 2: Hans Rosenplüt ('Fifteen Laments'), large collection of witty epigrams known as *Priamel* ('Preambles').
- D Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, MS M 50, 1460–2, 221 fols. 11 plays by one professional hand (see Plates 5 and 6), in two sections separated by

¹⁷ I draw on the following studies: G. Simon, *Die erste deutsche Fastnachtspieltradition: Zur Überlieferung, Textkritik und Chronologie der Nürnberger Fastnachtspiele des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Germanische Studien 240 (Hamburg, 1970), pp. 11–23 and 97–118; H. Kiepe, *Die Nürnberger Priameldichtung: Untersuchungen zu Hans Rosenplüt und zum Schreib- und Druckwesen im 15. Jahrhundert*, Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen zur deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters 74 (Munich, 1984); T. Habel, 'Vom Zeugniswert der Überlieferungsträger: Bemerkungen zum frühen Nürnberger Fastnachtspiel', in *Artibus: Kulturwissenschaft und deutsche Philologie des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit: Festschrift für Dieter Wuttke zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Stephan Füßel et al. (Wiesbaden, 1994), pp. 103–34.

Spruchdichtung (Rosenplüt, der Harder) and Rosenplüt *Priamel* plus verses saluting and praising wine (*Weingrüsse*, *Weinsegen*).

- W Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Q 564, c. 1450–75, 150 fols. 2 plays (fols. 120, 125–8; 128–31) by different hands. Other texts: song poems (MS F of *Minnesang*) from Walther von der Vogelweide to Konrad von Würzburg.
- E Dresden, Sächsische Landesbibliothek, MS M 183, 23 fols., c. 1470, one hand. 4 plays dated, in order, 1464, 1466, 1468, 1461.
- F Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, cod. 5339a, c. 1472, 399 fols., assembled from originally separate booklets, written by a professional scribe who, around 1490, wrote single play booklets now (in) P, H, X and Gd. 10 plays, 3 dispersed, 7 in sequence (fols. 338r–370r). Other texts: verse *dits*, *fabliaux*, *Priameln* and *Weingrüsse* by Rosenplüt.
- N Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 439, c. 1475, three sections, 121 fols. Contains (fols. 1r–18r) Hans Folz's anti-Judaic carnival play 'Kaiser Constantinus'. Belonged to Folz's friend Anton Haller (d. 1497), Nuremberg judge, castle magistrate, as *Genannter*, member of the Larger City Council. Later owned by his son-in-law, the physician and humanist Hartmann Schedel who foliated the MS. Other texts: *Minnereden*, *fabliaux*, didactic poems.
- X Weimar, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, Q 566, c. 1480, 256 fols. 15 fascicles (1 quire, some 2), originally used separately. Copy and work book of Hans Folz who wrote fols. 1–124. 2 plays. One play booklet (fols. 89r–97r, Rosenplüt, Keller 39) written by professional scribe. Working copy of Keller 105 (22r–26r) written by Folz. Other texts: 24 *Meisterlieder* and fencing manual by Folz, two anti-Judaic tracts, short alchemical and astronomical texts in Latin.
- R Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. 29. 6 Aug. 4^o, c. 1480, 70 fols. 1 play (fols. 29r–32v, Keller 96). Owner and main scribe: Christian Auer, Nuremberg citizenship 1478, notary, imperial notary (1493). Other texts: Rosenplüt verse tales, *Sprüche* and *Priamel*.
- H Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Hs. A III 20, c. 1490, 10 fols. Single quire booklet (unbound) with Rosenplüt's play 'Das Fest des Königs von England' (Keller 100). 1r: title; 2r: play text begins. About the same time this professional scribe wrote a second play booklet with same play (now part of P) and plays in Gd. 1471–3 he had written F.
- P Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. ms. germ. 13, c. 1490, 187 fols. 11 originally separate booklets (quires). Two play booklets, the first (pp. 57–67) written by professional scribe who also produced F, H, and Gd. Price (*III creutzer*) marked at top of cover sheet of two booklets (pp. 69, 153). Scribe or owner offered booklets for sale.
- G Wolfenbüttel, Herzog-August-Bibliothek, cod. 18. 12 Aug. 4^o, 417 fols. 66 plays. Compiled from older manuscripts and partly written by the Augsburg

merchant and sometime author (1 fabliau) Claus Spaun (d. c. 1520), dated 1494. 3 sections written by Nuremberg scribes. Hand b: professional scribe, 51 plays, 1480s, close to Hans Folz and his circle (see Plate 7). Hand d: four single play booklets by professional scribe who also wrote F, booklets in X, P, and H. Spaun removed covers. He himself enscribed 9 plays, at least some from printed booklets.

The play the barber-surgeon and playwright Hans Folz wrote down c. 1480 in X appears to be the only text close to the playwrighting process. The play (Keller 105) also survives in G. So we can tell that Folz copied the speeches out of order, omitting part names and stage directions. On fol. 22v, for example, he entered both the prologue and the epilogue of the presenter. He underlined the names of the hucksters, quacks and charlatans who advertise their dubious marketplace goods and services in this play. A defining feature of Nuremberg carnival plays is that many speeches, especially those spoken by precursors, are recycled. Folz appears to have stored speeches in this workbook in order to use them in his own play scripts.

The small unbound fascicle E is the only manuscript to transmit nothing but plays. It would appear to be close to carnival theatre. We assume that the dates refer to the years in which these four plays were first staged. Unlike the hands-on marks Raber's booklets manifest, however, one finds in E none of the signs of theatre traffic. The scribe also copies the first play (1461) last and in the title rubric refers to the 1468 play preceding it. Hence at least eight years had passed before the 1461 play found its way into this manuscript.

In all other collections, carnival plays appear in the non-dramatic company of texts Nuremberg townspeople liked to read. They are miscellanies of various sizes, containing plays in diverse numbers, from one (R) to sixty-six pieces (scribe b of G). In percentages Thomas Habel (n. 17) has calculated their share as running from 5% (W, X) to 83% (G) of the text total. In the largest collections (M and G), the scribes group the plays together to form large blocks. Others, like K and D, disperse them among diverse shorter texts meant to entertain and instruct. The company plays keep is very mixed: verse tales (bawdy and edifying), fables, instructional verse poems on love (*Minnereden*), wisdom, good living and religion; poems in praise of the Virgin; household remedies and self-help manuals; Middle High German song poetry (F) and, in Folz's copy book (X), his *Meisterlieder*, all texts without musical notation and therefore designed for reading.

The author the miscellanies most avidly collect is Rosenplüt. This is not by chance. The chainmail maker, brass founder and artillery engineer Hans Rosenplüt (c. 1400–60) is both the first German craftsman poet and the first carnival playwright known by name. Carnival theatricals no doubt existed before Rosenplüt came to Nuremberg in 1426. But he raised them to a form of popular literature and he and his friends probably wrote or adapted the nearly fifty plays the oldest manuscript, M, ascribes to him. I shall return to this point. In the fifteenth century and beyond, Nuremberg was Germany's

most productive literary center. Its scribal shops brought forth vast numbers of manuscripts, mainly for the reading pleasure of Nuremberg's venture-some, prosperous and educated citizens. Rosenplüt raised carnival plays to the level of literature. That is why they found their way into miscellanies targeting Nuremberg's many readers.

Unlike Raber's scripts, playbooks used in theatre productions did not survive in Nuremberg. The Nuremberg plays we have were meant to be read. This is corroborated by the way the scribes enter them into the codices. Let us look at a sample (Plates 5 and 6). In this play from D, a young man asks judge and jurors of a church court when a man should marry and who is qualified to marry. The speakers on the first page (fol. 170v, Plate 5) are the prologue, the youth, the judge and the first juror. Because the scribe is writing for readers, however, he omits the speaker names. When he gets to the end of the play (Plate 6), he writes only the first line of the epilogue, omitting the rest. Carnival play conclusions (good night, take care of your house, apologies for our rudeness, see you again next year) say more or less the same thing. They are not part of the plot and would therefore be of little interest to readers.

Stage directions were often entered in red ink. One might therefore think that the D-scribe simply forgot to revisit this text with his red quill. But the Nuremberg professional writing the large collection Gb (51 plays) also often leaves out the stage directions. Although he took care to rubricate initials, the Gb scribe frequently left no space for speaker names and staging instructions. The Augsburg merchant and manuscript collector Claus Spaun found these omissions disconcerting. Wherever the Nuremberg scribe Gb left spaces between speeches (as in Plate 7), Spaun squeezes in names and stage directions, using the appropriate red ink. To make the parts stand out, he also places *capitulum* marks next to the beginning of each speech and underlines the first words. As Linke suggests (1988, p. 550), Spaun may have rubricated the plays in older reading manuscripts because he had plans to stage them again in Augsburg. Spaun's effort also serves as a warning to those editing plays or using the rubrics to reconstruct performances: the stage directions we have may be the handiwork of a scribe.

Judging from the script and other marks, professional scribes wrote most of the Nuremberg manuscripts, at times working two in tandem in the same shop (M, K). Only two of the hands we can identify belong to men doing something else for the living. The barber-surgeon Hans Folz (c. 1435–1513), as noted, copied one play in order to recycle it for his own playmaking (X). The notary Christian Auer wrote one play into his miscellany (R), presumably to serve his reading pleasure. The owners we are able to identify appear to be little different from the kind of people who bought books at that time: affluent enough to afford expensive manuscripts and educated enough to read them. We encounter a judge and high city official whom Folz befriended (Anton Haller, N), a physician and Humanist scholar (Hartmann Schedel, N), a wealthy merchant with a theatrical flair (Claus Spaun of Augsburg) and the

townsman Michel Geyswurgel (M) of whom we know only that he owned a house near the Nuremberg marketplace and was sued by his neighbors who operated a public bath.

The most distinctive production feature of our manuscripts is that five were partly or wholly assembled from fascicles written and marketed as single booklets with paper sheet covers (X, H, P, Gd, F). One scribe produced such booklets, some containing plays, from about 1472 (F) to about 1490 (H, P). In H he writes the title of the play, Rosenplüt's 'Das Fest des Königs von England' (Keller 100) on the front cover, then starts the text on fol. 2r. He enscribes two other booklets with the same play (F, P), leaving the last sheet blank to serve as back cover. Depending on text length, these booklets consist of quires that vary in size from two to seven bifolia. On the front cover sheet of two booklets in P (not ones containing plays) appears a price notation (*III creutzer*). This suggests that the booklets were offered for sale and read before being bound into codices, an expensive operation that many owners would not have been able to afford.

The Nuremberg play booklets contain none of the inserts and dramaturgical notes that link Raber's booklets to active theatre business. The short entertaining and instructional poems that keep plays company in the Nuremberg miscellanies were also disseminated in booklets. This suggests that the play booklets, too, were primarily aimed at readers. They signal a change in reading habits. As Hansjürgen Kiepe (n. 17, p. 178) suggests, people no longer read texts aloud in groups, as a form of socializing, but now preferred reading privately, reading by themselves.

The dissemination of Nuremberg carnival plays appears to stop around 1500. No play manuscripts were written after that time. But Nuremberg plays continued to be printed, or rather some printed booklets Hans Folz produced between 1479 and 1488 in his own print shop were reissued by other Nuremberg printers until 1538. A total of nine such imprints survive (G. Simon, n. 17, pp. 87–8). Claus Spaun (G) copied some Folz plays from printed booklets (Kiepe, pp. 202–4). The imprints that Folz – who knew how to market himself – produced in his shop in the 1480s (two still exist) constitute the first German plays ever printed. They feature a woodcut as frontispiece with the title set above it. They were evidently intended for readers and thus continue the play dissemination in single hand-written booklets that started in the 1470s.

Why did so many carnival plays survive from Nuremberg when those staged in other towns, like Lübeck, were fated to vanish? The custom of mummers going from house to house at carnival and putting on sketches existed long before Rosenplüt arrived in Nuremberg in 1426. The Swabian Neidhart play and the originally Low German play 'Seven Women and One Man' show that carnival theatricals existed in south and north German towns by the 1370s. In most towns carnival theatre remained at the subliterate level: these short improvised sketches were not worthy of permanent record.

Nuremberg was different. Here Rosenplüt raised customary plays, written and unwritten, to the level of literature. As entertainment literature, then, carnival plays found in this flourishing city a reading public that was fond of short comic and didactic verse texts of many kinds. As reading texts, plays made their way in large numbers into manuscripts and, with Hans Folz, into print.

No other form of medieval text production suffered as many losses as play manuscripts and the various scripts written out to perform plays. The surviving manuscripts constitute a small fraction of the vast theatrical repertory municipal records attest. From 1300 on, theatre of some kind, religious or secular, existed in virtually every European town. Theatre historians must work more directly with manuscripts. Before interpreting a dramatic text, they need to study, at first hand, the manuscript in which it happens to have survived. For what purpose was the manuscript written? How close is it to the original? In theatre, in contrast to literature, the 'original' is not a text, but the performance for which the playwright wrote it or a later performance from which the copy we have derives. Accurate reading and, of course more so, editing depends on identifying the historical function of a given manuscript. Is it a performance script? A composite copy of several performances? If not, how many steps removed is it from performance? Was the manuscript copied to be stored in someone's library? Did the scribe adapt a play text for readers? If so, is it possible to distinguish the performance script from the revisions made for readers? If the text we have was clearly meant to be read, as were the Nuremberg carnival plays, we cannot assume that the stage directions are those of the performance script. The scribe may have simplified them for readers or, as Claus Spaun did, added his own rubrics. Examining the manuscripts of medieval and early modern plays, especially those of much neglected continental Europe, is an important area for future research.

The 'Lancelot-Graal' Project

ALISON STONES

This essay describes the rationale for the pilot phase of a computer data-base of text and pictures that we hope will eventually form a Corpus of 'Lancelot-Graal' manuscripts, will present a model for manuscript analysis in general, and will have a range of other applications beyond the field of manuscript studies. An international team of Old French specialists (Keith Busby, Elspeth Kennedy, Roger Middleton) and art historians and manuscript specialists (Susan Blackman, Martine Meuwese, Alison Stones) are collaborating with technical consultants in information science and telecommunications (Kenneth Sochats, Guoray Cai) to create and use a searchable database of primary manuscript pages and secondary commentary linked to a searchable database of images. The specialists will use the database to generate a variety of products, both in the traditional form of books and articles, and in electronic form on the World Wide Web and CD-ROMs.

What we hope to learn is more about the intentions of the makers of the manuscripts and those (patrons? directors of operations?) who guided them in the choices they made. Our work to date shows that the choice, placement and composition of the illustrations varies very considerably from one manuscript to another, even among copies produced by the same scribes, decorators and artists. Certain manuscripts display at times a very surprising degree of careful attention to the nuances the text in that copy conveys. Illustrations showing the same episode in other copies will not necessarily present a comparably text-dependent picture. We are looking at which, where and how, in the hopes of moving a step closer to understanding why.

Conceptual framework

The idea for collaborative work on the manuscripts of the 'Lancelot-Graal' has developed from several models: the editing and interpretive work of text scholars; the *Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes* project; studies by myself and others on various aspects of the production, iconography and cultural context of the illustrated 'Lancelot-Graal' manuscripts and the illustration of other literary texts; the growing emergence of World Wide Web sites as important vehicles for research, learning and teaching in humanities disciplines; and the

Geographic Information Systems software projects under way at the University of Pittsburgh under the direction of Kenneth Sochats.

Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes grew from a session I chaired in 1988 at the 23rd International Medieval Congress at Kalamazoo, Michigan. The participants, Keith Busby, Terry Nixon, Lori Walters and I collaborated to launch and edit a research project that encompasses a catalogue of all forty-five manuscripts and fragments of the romances of Chrétien, a corpus of illustrations of the hands of all the scribes, reproductions of all the illustrations and seventeen essays by scholars from different disciplines – Old French specialists, manuscript scholars and art historians, about aspects of the presentation, transmission, interpretation, reception, decoration and illustration of the manuscripts. We published a volume containing the materials of a research dossier and a volume of selected essays demonstrating how scholars approached those materials with different questions in mind.¹

The present study of the 'Lancelot-Graal' manuscript tradition is also a collaborative effort among art historians, text scholars, manuscript specialists, and now specialists in Information Science. Like the romances of Chrétien de Troyes, the 'Lancelot-Graal' is also a text in Old French to which scholars in various disciplines have devoted a good deal of attention as editors and critics.² However, the compilation and its copies present

¹ *Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. K. Busby, T. Nixon et al., 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1993).

² The edition of the entire cycle is *The Vulgate Version of the Arthurian Romances*, edited from manuscripts in the British Museum, ed. H. O. Sommer, 8 vols. (Washington, 1909–16), based on London, British Library, MSS Additional 10292–4; editions of particular branches are: *Estoire: Seynt Graal or the sank Ryal*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, 2 vols. (London, 1861–63), based on London, BL Royal 14.E.III; *Le saint Graal*, ed. E. F. F. Hucher, 3 vols. (Le Mans, 1877–78), based on Le Mans, Médiathèque Louis Aragon, MS 354; *L'Estoire del saint Graal*, ed. J.-P. Ponceau, 2 vols. (Paris, 1997), based on Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, MS 1; *Josèphe: Robert de Boron, Joseph d'Arimathie*, ed. R. O'Gorman (Toronto, 1995), based, for the prose version, on Tours, Bibliothèque municipale MS 951; *Merlin: Merlin*, ed. G. Paris and J. Ulrich (Paris, 1886), based on London, British Library, MS Additional 38117 (the Huth manuscript); *Robert de Boron, Merlin, roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. A. Micha (Geneva, 1979), based on Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS fr. 20047; *Lancelot: Lancelot: roman en prose du 13e siècle*, ed. A. Micha, 9 vols. (Geneva, 1978–83), based on Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 45; *Lancelot do Lac*, ed. E. M. Kennedy, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1980), based on Paris, BNF MS fr. 768; *Queste: La Queste del saint Graal*, ed. A. Pauphilet (Paris, 1923), based on Lyon, Bibliothèque de la Ville, Palais des Arts 77; *Mort Artu: Mort Artu: An Old French Prose Romance of the XIIIth Century, being the last division of 'Lancelot du Lac'*, ed. J. D. Bruce (Halle an der Saale, 1910), based on Paris, BNF fr. 342; *La Mort le roi Artu, roman du XIIIe siècle*, ed. J. Frappier (Paris, 1936), based on Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, MS 3347. Particularly important studies are E. M. Kennedy, 'The Scribe as Editor', in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier* (Geneva, 1970), I, 523–31; eadem, *Lancelot and the Grail: A Study of the Prose Lancelot* (Oxford, 1986). Other recent studies are drawn together in *The Lancelot-Graal Cycle: Text and Transformations*, ed. W. W. Kibler (Austin, TX, 1994).

logistical challenges that made the idea of publishing a two-volume study as we had done with the manuscripts of Chrétien seem too limited a goal, although we envisage publication in book and article form as a parts of the products we expect the project to generate.

The number of surviving copies of all or part of the five-part 'Lancelot-Graal' cycle, counted by Brian Woledge at some 209 manuscripts and fragments,³ is more difficult to manage than the forty-five manuscripts and fragments that comprise the corpus of Chrétien manuscripts. There are over four times as many copies as Chrétien manuscripts, to say nothing of the much higher proportion of illustrated copies among the extant manuscripts, and there are more illustrations in the illustrated copies – sometimes several hundred per volume. Describing and reproducing even a proportion of them is prohibitively expensive, either to acquire the photographs or to publish them, to say nothing of the work involved in determining which are the illustrated folios in each manuscript. In most cases this must be done from first-hand observation.⁴ Previous studies of these illustrated manuscripts,⁵

³ B. Woledge, *Bibliographie des romans et nouvelles en prose française antérieurs à 1500* (Geneva, 1975), nos. 93, 96, 114, and idem, *Supplément 1954–1973* (Geneva, 1975), nos. 93, 96, 114; see also A. Micha, 'Les manuscrits du *Lancelot* en prose', *Romania* 84 (1963), 28–60, 478–99; 'La tradition manuscrite du *Lancelot* en prose', *Romania* 85 (1964), 293–318, 478–517. Many of the manuscripts listed separately by Woledge and Micha are actually parts of the same multi-volume set, while other partial copies may have lost their sister volumes, so that a count based simply on numbers of manuscripts is misleading. Both Woledge and Micha are also frequently inaccurate in their dating attributions. Suggested emendations to their lists are to be found in M. A. Stones, 'The Illustrations of the French Prose *Lancelot* 1250–1320' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1971); eadem, 'The Earliest Illustrated Prose *Lancelot* Manuscript?' *Reading Medieval Studies* 3 (1977), 3–44 at 42–4, and eadem, 'Aspects of Arthur's Death in Medieval Illumination', in C. Baswell and W. Sharpe, eds., *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition* (New York, 1988), pp. 52–101 at pp. 87–95. Fragments are still coming to light, such as those now in the Sharon and Neil Phillips/Phillips Family Collection, New York, which passed through Sotheby's on 14 July 1981 as lot 30 and Christie's on 3 April 1984 as lot 62; see F. Avril and N. Reynaud, *Les manuscrits à peintures en France 1440–1520* (Paris, 1993), p. 37, and M. T. Bruckner, 'Reconstructing Arthurian History', in N. Netzer and V. Reinburg, eds., *Memory and the Middle Ages* (Boston, 1995), pp. 57–76 at 68–9 and nos. 55–7, 58–61.

⁴ There are only two facsimiles: *La grant Queste del Saint Graal. Versione inedita del XIII secolo del ms. Udine, Biblioteca Arcivescovile 177* (Tricesimo, 1990), and *La Búsqueda del santo Grial* (Dijon, BM 527), ed. C. Alvar with F. Avril (Valencia, 1997). Several of the BNF manuscripts, including fr. 95, fr. 112, fr. 113–16, fr. 117–20, are now available for consultation on microfilm in the Cabinet des manuscrits.

⁵ The most comprehensive study of the illustration is still R. S. Loomis and L. H. Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art* (New York, 1938), which includes reference to, and illustration of, media other than manuscripts. See also A. Stones, 'Arthurian Art Since Loomis', in W. Van Hoecke, G. Tournoy and W. Verbeke, eds., *Arturus Rex, II: Acta Conventus Lovaniensis 1987* (Leuven, 1991), pp. 21–78. Studies of the iconography of one or more branches of the cycle are: E. M. Remak-Honef, 'Text and Image in the *Estoire del saint Graal*: A Study of London, British Library, MS Royal

including my own,⁶ have of necessity, been limited to a consideration of just a few manuscripts or illustrations, selected either by chronology, or by subject, or for other unstated reasons.

The manuscripts of the Pilot Project

While it is essential to start from a general picture of what survives,⁷ we have decided to begin our project with a detailed study of three related manuscripts which present particularly interesting textual, illustrative and historical characteristics. They are the copy now divided between Amsterdam Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica MS 1/Manchester, The John Rylands University Library, MS Fr. 1/Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 215, and the other two copies produced by the same team of craftsmen: London, British Library MSS Additional 10292-4 and Royal 14.E.III. The group has been convincingly dated in the first quarter of the fourteenth century on the basis of the inscription on the tomb depicted on f. 55v of Add. 10292 (Plate 1) which includes the year 1316,⁸ and stylistic arguments support an attribution to western Flanders or eastern Artois, on the basis of such parallels as the portrait of himself before the Virgin and Child added by Gilbert de Sainte-

14. E. III' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of North Carolina, 1987); M. Meuwese, 'L'Estoire del saint Graal: Een Studie over de Relatie tussen Miniaturen en Tekst in het Eerste Deel van de *Vulgaatcyclus* uit de Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica te Amsterdam' (unpublished doctoraalscriptie, University of Leiden, 1990); S. A. Blackman, 'The Manuscripts and Patronage of Jacques d'Armagnac', 2 vols. (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1993), which includes (I, 213-43) a comparative table of the Arthurian subjects. The tables are also reproduced in eadem, 'A Pictorial Synopsis of Arthurian Episodes for Jacques d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours', in *Word and Image in Arthurian Romance*, ed. Keith Busby (New York, 1996), pp. 3-57.

⁶ My own focus has been on style or iconography or on a particular copy: the Morgan Lancelot (New York, Morgan Library, MS M 805-6) was included in 'L'atelier artistique de la *Vie de sainte Benoîte d'Origny*: nouvelles considérations', in *Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France* (no volume number) (1990), 378-400. In the articles 'Images of Temptation, Seduction and Discovery in the Prose *Lancelot*: A Preliminary Note', in *Festschrift Gerhard Schmidt, Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 46-7 (1993-94), 725-35, and 'Illustrating Lancelot and Guinevere', in *Lancelot and Guinevere: A Casebook*, ed. L. Walters (New York, 1996), pp. 125-57, I considered the iconographical treatment of the Lancelot-Guinevere romance. In 'The Illustrations in the Prose *Lancelot*, New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke MS 229 and Paris, BNF fr. 95, Prolegomena to a Comparative Study', in *Word and Image in Arthurian Romance*, ed. Busby, pp. 206-83, I took a manuscript now in two parts and examined questions of its iconography, style, production, and ownership. Other essays on the *Lancelot-Graal* in Busby's and Walters' edited volumes also adopt narrow foci.

⁷ A full analytical list, based on first-hand examination made over the last three decades, is in preparation.

⁸ Reproduced in Loomis, *Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art*, fig. 248.

Aldegonde to the psalter of Tournai use which he presented in 1323 to the Chartreuse of Longuenesse near Saint-Omer (Plate 2).⁹ The layout of the page and the scribal characteristics are fairly consistent throughout all the volumes, but at least two scribes participated; two decorators did the champie initials, and at least three artists did the miniatures. The major painter worked in all three copies (Plates 1, 5), while hand 2 worked only in Additional 10293 (Plate 3) and hand 3 worked only in Rylands/Douce (Plate 4). The text versions also differ, nor are the selections of illustrations the same. There are, in addition, significant variations in how comparable subjects are depicted and described in the accompanying lemmata or rubrics. For instance, Lancelot crossing the sword bridge, watched by Guinevere who has been imprisoned by King Baudemagus, was included among the original illustrations in Add. 10293 (Plate 5) but omitted in the Amsterdam manuscript. Around 1400, the owner of Amsterdam (whose identity is unknown) had a miniature showing this subject added to the book in the bottom margin of the appropriate folio (Plate 6). This section is missing in Royal 14.E.III. There are many more interesting subjects and sequences of images that have never been explored comparatively. We plan a comprehensive set of comparisons among the illustrations in all three copies in order to find out what the variants in selection and treatment tell us about the relative priority of one copy over the others, the iconographical preferences to which the different copies attest, and what that tells about the circumstances of production.

Other puzzles we hope to solve are questions of commissioning and ownership, using clues in the form of shields, inscriptions, and aspects of the physical make-up of the manuscripts such as water-marks on the paper flysheets, later annotations on the manuscripts themselves, and the like. Arthurian heraldry is profusely represented, with relative consistency for the first time in the entire illustrative tradition,¹⁰ but there are also some shields that may reflect a desire on the part of patrons to have themselves shown as Lancelot or as another knight. There are also shields on the borders of opening pages that seem to point to early ownership, and annotations by later owners who may be traceable. In the case of Royal 14.E.III there are indications that it was owned by Richard Roos, knight, then by Elizabeth Woodville (d. 1492), wife of King Edward IV of England, and Lady Jane Grey,¹¹ and watermarks on the flysheets of the Amsterdam copy indicate that the paper used in its eighteenth-century rebinding came from Amsterdam (which does not mean that the book has been there continuously). Close

⁹ A. Stones, 'Another Short Note on Rylands fr. 1 and Douce 215', in *Romanesque and Gothic: Essays for George Zarnecki*, ed. N. Stratford (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 185–92.

¹⁰ A. Stones, 'Les débuts de l'héraldique dans l'illustration des romans arthuriens', in *Les Armoriaux*, ed. H. Loyau and M. Pastoureau, Cahiers du léopard d'or 8 (Paris, 1998), pp. 395–420.

¹¹ Noted by H. L. D. Ward, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts* (London, 1883), I, 341.



Plate 1 Duchess Flegentine commissions the Tombs of Judgment. London, British Library, MS Additional 10292, fol. 55v (reproduced by permission of the British Library).



Plate 2 Guilbert de Sainte-Aldegonde kneels before the Virgin and Child. Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 270, fol. H (photo: A. Stones).



Plate 3 Gauvain visits King Baudemagus, who lies ill, attended by two monks. London, British Library, MS Additional 10293, fol. 326r (reproduced by permission of the British Library).



Plate 4 King Arthur, Queen Guinevere and courtiers watch Galaad hold the sword he has drawn from the stone. Manchester, the John Rylands University Library, MS French 1, fol. 183v (reproduced by permission of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester).



Plate 5 Queen Guinevere, King Baudemagus and courtiers watch Lancelot cross the sword bridge. London, British Library, MS Additional 10293, fol. 128v (reproduced by permission of the British Library).

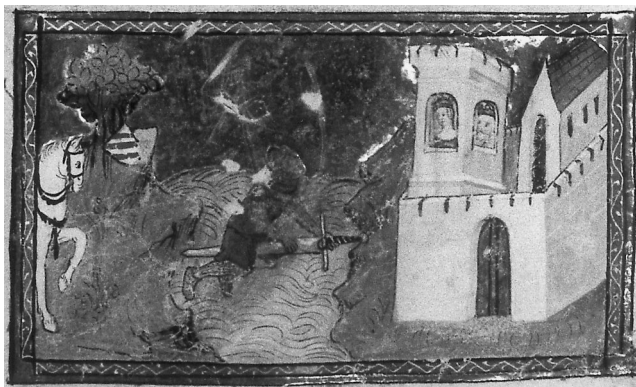


Plate 6 Queen Guinevere and King Baudemagus watch Lancelot cross the sword bridge. Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica, MS 1, iii, fol. 45r (photo: A. Stones).

scrutiny of the manuscripts may provide indications that will allow us to reconstruct other aspects of their history and reception.

We aim to create a resource in which we can see the pages in these manuscripts and their component elements, to use it ourselves to ask and answer questions prompted by the manuscripts and their physical, textual and pictorial appearance, and to make it available to others.

The Web component

We are creating a computer database as a means to preserve, store, analyse, compare, discuss, and eventually disseminate, the manuscript pages in these copies of the 'Lancelot-Graal' and our work on them.

The impact of the World Wide Web is making itself felt in manuscript studies. It has become possible through the web to transmit large numbers of high quality images and to accompany them with descriptors of various kinds. The present project is one of several that draw in some measure upon pioneering efforts begun more than a two decades ago at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris and at Orléans under the auspices of the Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, based at that time on slides made of the illustration and decoration of manuscripts.¹² The collections of microfilms of manuscripts in Austrian and other European library holdings made from the early 1970s for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library at St John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota, and the Vatican Film Archive at St Louis University in St Louis brought important manuscript resources to the United States and fostered early efforts to manipulate overwhelming quantities of pictorial data.¹³ More

¹² Christine Baryla at the Bibliothèque Saint-Geneviève and Odile Lépinay and Gilles Kagan at the IRHT have been particularly helpful in explaining and demonstrating the scope and goals of their projects. Both initially used slides taken by François Garnier as a continuation and expansion of the wide-ranging campaigns of photography and exhibitions of manuscripts in French libraries organized in the 1950s by Jean Porcher. See L. Holtz and G. Kagan, 'La numérisation des enluminures des fonds de manuscrits des bibliothèques de France', in *La conservation: une science en évolution, bilans et perspectives (Actes des troisièmes journées internationales d'études de l'Association pour la Recherche scientifique sur les arts graphiques)* (Paris, 1997), pp. 168–74.

¹³ I served on the advisory board of HMML from 1984 to 1991 and co-authored a pilot project sponsored by Control Data Corporation to computerize images from HMML's collections: see A. Stones and R. S. Arthur, *Manuscripts, Illumination and PARIS* (Minneapolis, MN, 1981). HMML and the Vatican Film Library are now collaborating on an Electronic Access to Medieval Manuscripts with Columbia University and the University of California Berkeley in projects funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that will be made available for a fee to scholars (see <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Scriptorium> and <http://www2.csbsju.edu/hmml/eamms/index.html>). See also F. C. Minzer et al., 'Toward On-line, Worldwide Access to Vatican Library Materials', *IBM Journal of Research and Development* 40 (1966), 139–62.

recently, the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, the British Library and the Bodleian Library have launched internet manuscript sites and other libraries in the United States and abroad have sites in preparation.¹⁴ In addition, there are other projects concentrating on corpora of particular texts, such as the *Speculum maius* of Vincent of Beauvais and the *Roman de la Rose*.¹⁵

The creation and dissemination of World Wide Web sites is governed in large part by issues of copyright. Manuscript sites have been developed primarily by institutions that own the copyright, and generally also the manuscripts themselves. Indeed, the present project will be posted on the internet only with the full accord of the keepers concerned, with whom agreements allowing the photography and the research on the project have been reached.¹⁶ My copyrighted site of images of medieval art and architecture in France and England (<http://www.pitt.edu/~medart>) is available free on the Internet,¹⁷ while my teaching sites are accessible only to University

¹⁴ Of particular interest is the BNF site, The Age of King Charles V (<http://www.bnf.fr/enluminures/aaccueil.htm>), based on details (only – no full page images) of a wide variety of different illustrated texts of the fourteenth century; the Beowulf project (<http://www.bl.uk/diglib/beowulf>), photographed with a digitizing camera and enhanced to allow superior enlargement so that letters and words previously covered by repairs to the parchment can be read; and the Bodleian Library's demonstration pages (<http://www.rsl.ox.ac.uk/imacat.html>), which offer different kinds of resolutions and enlargement options. The Morgan Library's on-line cataloguing project (text only), now in progress, can be viewed in hard copy in the Morgan Library's Reading Room. I thank Fr Leonard Boyle, O.P. (late of the BAV), Aleksandra Orlovska (BNF), Andrew Prescott (BL), and Bruce Barker-Benfield (Bodley), as well as Hope Mayo (New York), and William Voelkle, Roger Wieck and Susan L'Engle (Morgan Library) for helpful discussion of these projects and their methods. Among the American manuscript projects now under way I found the on-line exhibition of illuminated manuscripts in Utah collections (http://www2.art.utah.edu/Paging_Through/index.html) particularly helpful and thank its author, Elizabeth Peterson, for discussing in detail her methods for scanning, enhancing and page-making. The sites mentioned in this footnote are all available free of charge.

¹⁵ The Corpus of Vincent de Beauvais Manuscripts, directed by Monique Paulmier-Foucart and Marie-Christine Duchene, is at the Atelier Vincent de Beauvais, Nancy; the Roman de la Rose project is at Providence, Rhode Island, directed by Meradith T. McMunn and William McMunn. I thank all of them for helpful discussion of their projects.

¹⁶ For their interest and cooperation, I thank F. A. Janssens (Amsterdam, Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica); Bruce Barker-Benfield (Oxford, Bodleian Library); Peter McNiven (Manchester, The John Rylands University Library); Pamela Porter (London, British Library).

¹⁷ This site has been developed and posted since 1994 by graduate assistant Jane Vadnal (History of Art and School of Information Science) who has also contributed her copyrighted images (so acknowledged) to the project. We have been assisted by undergraduates working for academic credit and by volunteers. Funds for research assistance in 1994 and scanning assistance in 1998 were provided by the History of Art and Architecture Department. Work on ~medart will eventually include

of Pittsburgh students by course password, limited to the term in which the course is taught.¹⁸

Our approach to creating World Wide Web materials for the 'Lancelot-Graal' project is based on collaboration with specialists in information science and telecommunications at the School of Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh. Kenneth Sochats and his graduate assistant Guoray Cai have pioneered conceptual mapping projects using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software to cross-link different levels of information across a spatially defined spectrum.¹⁹ Our project treats the manuscript page as a conceptual map whose constituent elements can be identified and defined, plotted, compared, contrasted, linked to each other in any number of possible combinations, accompanied by annotations, and associated with information objects to assist the reader or analyst with further exploring the manuscript. These information objects can be sounds, text, images or other forms of information which will provide expert commentary, guides to characters or underlying themes and other information to support the analysis and understanding of the manuscript. The attachments will underlie the image of the manuscript so as to not interfere with its pictorial impression and interpretation. They will be summoned by 'clicking' on parts of the manuscript's image or on buttons located outside the manuscript's frame. We are not aware of any similar GIS application of the type we propose in existence today.

monuments in other countries – Italy, Spain, Greece, Germany, Austria, Poland, Turkey. A paper on this and my teaching sites, with a brief mention of the *Lancelot-Graal* project, 'Teaching and Research in Medieval Art on the Internet: Three Sites', appears in: *Computing and Visual Culture: Representation and Interpretation*, ed. T. Szrajber (Fourteenth Annual CHArt Conference, London, 1999), pp. 111–22. The sites I have developed at the University of Pittsburgh since 1994 adhere to the University's posted copyright restrictions, which can be consulted on <http://www.library.pitt.edu/research/copyright/>.

¹⁸ Courses under development under the rubric History of Art and Architecture are: Survey of Medieval Art and Architecture; Medieval Artistic Patronage, from Justinian to Jacques Coeur; Medieval Cities: Paris and London; Medieval Iconography: What is the Grail? Course outline pages only can be seen on-line without restriction. These courses have been developed with small grants from the College of Arts and Science at the University of Pittsburgh between 1995 and 1999, with the assistance of undergraduates and graduates working for credit, and with the help of volunteers.

¹⁹ See, for instance, S. C. Hirtle and G. Cai, 'Classification Structures for Cognitive Maps', in *Data, Science, Classification and Related Methods*, ed. C. Hayashi et al. (Tokyo, 1998), pp. 394–403; K. Sochats and J. G. Williams, *The 1997 Pennsylvania Technology Atlas* (CD); eidem, *Communications and Networking Desk Reference* (New York, 1993). Limitations of space preclude my attaching here the appendix by Guorai Cai explaining the rationale for our selection of GI software which I presented at the Harvard Conference. It is to be published elsewhere.

The project to date

Various members of our team have presented papers using the materials of our project at the University of Pittsburgh School of Information Science and Department of History of Art and Architecture colloquia (1996 and 1998); the Leeds International Medieval Conference in July 1996; the International Arthurian Congress in Garda, 1996; the Computers and the History of Art Conference in London in October 1998; the Medieval Academy of America, April 1999; and the International Medieval Conference in Toulouse, 1999. Publications from these conferences are in preparation or in press.

Taxonomy

The project began at an invited conference and study-session at the University of Pittsburgh in October 1995, during which we drafted a taxonomy of information about the manuscripts, texts and pictures of the project.²⁰ We consulted published guides such as *Vocabulaire codicologique*,²¹ *Iconclass*,²² *Aleph*²³ and the Getty Thesaurus,²⁴ none of which quite correspond to the requirements of a non-religious text and its manuscripts and illustrations, nor can they accommodate the particular text-specific subjects of the 'Lancelot-Graal' which require new identification since no published subject-lists exist.²⁵ Our taxonomy remains a working document that is added to as we work.

²⁰ Funding came from a consortium of departments and programs: the Honors College, the Medieval and Renaissance Studies program, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the School of Information Science, the departments of French and Italian, History of Art and Architecture, German, to all of whom I am grateful.

²¹ Denis Muzerelle, *Vocabulaire codicologique: Répertoire méthodique des termes français relatifs aux manuscrits (Rubricae 1)* (Paris, 1985).

²² H. van de Waal et al., *Iconclass: An Iconographic Classification System*, 9 vols. (Amsterdam, 1973–).

²³ As used on-site at the Index of Christian Art, Princeton University (see <http://www.princeton.edu/~ica/icaintro.html>).

²⁴ *Art and Architecture Thesaurus*, ed. Toni Peterson, 3 vols. (New York and Oxford, 1990).

²⁵ In the late Fall of 1998, after this conference, the Berkeley–Columbia Digital Scriptorium posted its taxonomy on <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/Scriptorium>.

Imaging²⁶

The Amsterdam manuscript was photographed at the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica by Alison Stones with the assistance of Martine Meuwese in the summer of 1996, using a Nikon FTN 35 mm single-lens reflex camera on a tripod and Ektachrome 64 daylight slide film. The Rylands Library manuscript was photographed on film from the same batch by the Rylands photographer in 1997. The Bodleian and British Library manuscripts were photographed by their respective photographic departments in 1998.

We consulted specialists at the Morgan Library and the J. Paul Getty Museum for recommendations about the choice of film and photographic methods, and drew from my experience photographing in European and American libraries.²⁷ We considered that the far greater cost of Ektachrome transparencies is not justified by the results, for example, by comparing the British Library's CD-ROM, the Medieval Realm, made from slides, as opposed to the Maps CD-ROM, made from Ektachromes. Digitizing directly from the manuscripts was not an option.

Digitizing

Digitizing began at the University of Pittsburgh in Spring, 1998, by graduate students working for academic credit under the guidance of Alison Stones and Kenneth Sochats.²⁸ We use a Nikon 35mm slide scanner LA-1000 to make two scans, an archival version at 2400 dpi and a working version at 300 dpi.²⁹ A copy of each 300 dpi scan has been manipulated to a limited degree in

²⁶ Photography of the Amsterdam manuscript was funded by Alison Stones and Elspeth Kennedy. Funds to purchase new complete sets of slides of the Bodleian, Rylands and British Library manuscripts were provided by the Central Research Fund of the Office of Research, University of Pittsburgh, in 1997 and 1998. I gratefully acknowledge this support.

²⁷ My photographs of manuscripts are deposited at the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute, London, and at the Photo Study Archive of the J. Paul Getty Center in Santa Monica; my images of monuments can be consulted on <http://www.pitt.edu/~medart>, developed by my technical assistant Jane Vadnal, as noted above.

²⁸ In Spring term 1998, Nancy Bennett (School of Information Science) established scanning guidelines in consultation with Kenneth Sochats (School of Information Science) and Elizabeth Peterson (University of Utah, Department of Art). Art History graduate students Katheryn Dimitroff, Marion Dolan, Joan Gauthier, Mary Laurent, Savannah Schroll, with Claire Edwards and Jeremy Jacobs (English Department) and Jane Vadnal (School of Information Science), participated in digitizing and entering descriptors on spread sheets during parts of Fall and Spring Semesters 1999.

²⁹ In accordance with Bodleian Library restrictions, the slides of Douce 215 were scanned at 300 dpi only.

Adobe Photoshop, beginning with version 4 and (since 1999) in version 5. Exact records have been kept for each scanned image describing the enhancements performed. We began with pages containing miniatures or champie initials and have also scanned text pages when a member of our team requested particular passages. By the end of Spring Semester 1999 we have completed the scanning of the illustrated pages in the Amsterdam and Royal manuscripts and have made headway with Additional and Rylands.

Archiving

While the project is in progress, the original slides are preserved in acid-free boxes in the History of Art and Architecture Department at the University of Pittsburgh. The archival scans are preserved in a locked folder on the Department's Visual Resources Lab NT server. The 300 dpi images and their enhanced copies are preserved in separate folders on the NT server, which is routinely backed up to tape. Slides and scans will ultimately be maintained in optimum prevailing conditions at a specialist storage site. Migration strategies will be developed for its maintenance and transfer as standards of archiving improve.

Systems

For preliminary access and conference presentation while the project is in progress, the 300 dpi images have been copied to ImageAXS software. In Spring Semester 1999, eight graduate students have begun to develop Excel spread sheets containing information structured in layers: (1) image index (image scan identifier, place of preservation, library, shelf number, folio); (2) text (branch of the five-part cycle, edition references, variants); (3) rubric (space, actual words); (4) script (scribal hand, erasure, gap); (5) decoration (pen-flourished initial, border, champie initial); (6) miniature (format, frame, medium (gold, silver, colour), narrative content, component elements, specific incident, textual context); (7) references in secondary literature; (8) additional commentary. These layers are a preliminary step towards the full application of GIS software. Test examples were converted to Arc View software in late Spring 1999 and work on this continues in Summer 1999 under the guidance of Kenneth Sochats. Once we have transferred the information to the GIS system, the images and all layers of accompanying description and commentary can be electronically transmitted among the project participants who together and individually can make use of and contribute to the work of analysis. Thus, the accessor of the manuscript receives not only the manuscript artifact but also a rich corpus of ideas to help him or her better understand and appreciate the

manuscripts. Indeed, the GIS-based system might be viewed as a scholarly forum for presenting ideas about the manuscripts, their construction and history.

Unravelling the links between and among the different types of information about the 'Lancelot-Graal' is our narrow aim in this project, but as an intellectual exercise our tools and methodologies are generalizable to all kinds of other areas of conceptualization and analysis beyond the limits of humanities disciplines.

After Chaucer:
Resituating Middle English Poetry
in the
Late Medieval and Early Modern Period

JOHN J. THOMPSON

If text is both 'authority . . . Holy Scripture' (*textus*) and 'tissue' (textile) and if forensics is both the manipulation of argument to sustain a proposal (rhetoric) and the, apparently objective, empirical study of the evidence on which this proposal relies for its probity (science), then current theoretical and practical work in textual scholarship should probably be placed at several mutually contradictory positions on an epistemological scale.¹

One of the major issues that faced humanities scholarship in the final decades of last century is the status of evidence, a topic explored in print in the January 1996 issue of *PMLA*, and one which has been variously taken up by a number of modern textual critics, including several medievalists who have recently been exploring the relative merits of the 'old' and 'new' philologies.² As the quotation from David Greetham at the head of this essay suggests, such a topic has important, if also sometimes uncomfortable, implications for both modern editors and codicologists in the brave new postmodern world of epistemological uncertainty in which we find ourselves. The forensic mentality espoused by Greetham is one that recognizes the semantic flexibility of the key terms 'text' and 'forensic'. On the one hand, 'text' is seen as a concept that can be fixed and authoritative, but, on the other, it is described as 'textile', something that is layered and woven,

¹ Quoted from D. C. Greetham, 'Textual Forensics', *PMLA* 111 (1996), 32–51 (p. 33).

² Volume 111 (1996). In addition to the essays on 'The New Philology' in *Speculum* 65 (1990) and a number of specialized essay collections on the theory and practice of editing, surveyed in D. Pearsall, 'Theory and Practice in Middle English Editing', *TEXT* 7 (1994), 107–26, some interesting general ideas are expressed by the contributors in *The Past and Future of Medieval Studies*, ed. J. Van Engen (Notre Dame, IN, 1994). In revising this paper for publication, I have found particularly helpful the recent polemical account and plea for 'cultural specificity' in D. Lawton, 'Analytical Survey 1: Literary History and Cultural Study', *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997), 237–69.

and therefore logically capable of being unwoven in different ways. And 'forensic', for Greetham, not only represents a scientific approach to current textual theory and its application, but also enjoys a more subjective rhetorical value. Regardless of our previous training and present attitudes, Greetham's views on Textual Forensics offer us an opportunity to consider the manner in which fact and evidence have been and can be deployed in the study of some of the most important material vestiges of the Middle Ages – the manuscripts. In a burgeoning field of modern scholarly enquiry claiming as its territory nothing less than the nature of medieval textuality, pre-modern and early modern manuscript culture, and the histories of the early book and reading, it is not difficult to imagine that a sometimes uneasy relationship exists between objective empirical data ('scientific' evidence) and the different types of rhetoric involved in our particular brands of interdisciplinary research.

Having been offered this opportunity to suggest a 'new direction' for medieval manuscript studies, I am prompted to speculate that all specialists in such an enormous and multidisciplinary field will have to (and obviously ought to) spend an increasing proportion of their time and energy determining what constitutes evidence. If we accept that closer examination of the many hundreds of extant medieval manuscripts and early prints that remain relatively neglected and unread in this age of hypertext will not, *per se*, get us closer to some objective and truly empirical form of evidence, then thinking critically about the limits we set on admissible forms of evidence may well prove to be an interesting and profitable way to advance our research. Of course, in a situation where 'the status of a proof within a courtroom is arguably different from the status of an argument within a marketplace of ideas',³ we can hardly take it for granted that everyone will recognize the same limits or, indeed, that it will ever be possible to come to a consensus on the evidence that can be used in medieval manuscript and textual studies or other disciplines. The changes in our patterns of thinking sponsored by Feminist approaches, Cultural Studies or New Historicism remind us, for example, that the unsaid or the barely said can also constitute evidence, when set in an appropriate interpretational context. Although not always necessarily fully acknowledged, it also seems an unavoidable condition of service that most modern historians of the medieval book are likely to find themselves employing anecdotal manuscript and textual evidence to compensate for other absences as we continue our attempt to recuperate histories of reception and reading for the pre-printing era.⁴ Anecdotal evidence can be

³ Quotation attributed to N. J. Vickers in 'The Status of Evidence: A Roundtable', *PMLA* 111 (1996), 21–31 (p. 23).

⁴ It would be possible to cite a long list of examples where this has been the case, but see especially the team effort by a number of the contributors to this volume and their colleagues to piece together the beginnings of a history of the early book in

and has been profitably used for thick descriptive effect in the reconstruction of both the centre and margins of late medieval cultural history, but therein lies its inherent difficulty: a point that is not always sufficiently clearly recognized is that the anecdote is not solely an evidential tool for undermining a dominant ideology; it may also be employed to reflect a mainstream of thought and the values associated with such a system; treated with a degree of subtlety, the anecdote may even simultaneously perform both 'old' and 'new' historical functions.⁵

In the remainder of this essay, I want to test the validity of what I have just been saying by examining two related case histories that have been built up around manuscript and textual evidence associated with the verse writings and achievement of Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate.⁶ Both case histories raise important codicological issues relating to 'absence' and 'the barely said'; both are situated near the centre of what is understood to be the beginnings of 'The Chaucer Tradition' in fifteenth-century English poetry. By focussing on a pair of apparently outlandish anecdotes from the period, I think that it is possible to illustrate the complexity of a situation where two English poets – avid Chaucer readers who are now often regarded as apologists for the Lancastrian cause – can be witnessed attempting to situate themselves and their writing through the memorialization of Chaucer's absence.

It has often been remarked that Chaucer was acknowledged as a major poet from his own day onwards.⁷ Seventy-five years ago, the issue was foregrounded when Caroline Spurgeon impressively marshalled the evidence for a five-hundred year tradition of Chaucer criticism and allusion. Her survey offers an extraordinary accumulation of data upon which all subsequent commentaries on the reception of Chaucer still heavily depend.⁸ Her commentary describes Chaucer's reputation passing through six fairly well marked stages (summarized on pp. x–lxxii), the first of which

England and Scotland in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, ed. J. Griffith and D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1989).

⁵ A general point of which I have been reminded by the varied but highly effective rhetorical use of anecdotal evidence in two recent books: D. Aers and L. Staley, *The Powers of the Holy: Religion, Politics and Gender in Late Medieval English Culture* (University Park, PA, 1996), and P. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation 1399–1422* (New Haven and London, 1998).

⁶ I am here building upon work for a forthcoming monograph on anthologies and miscellanies containing English courtly love lyrics. See also my 'Chaucer's *An ABC In and Out of Context*', *Poetica* 37 (1993), 38–48 and 'A Poet's Contacts with the Great and the Good: Further Consideration of Thomas Hoccleve's Texts and Manuscripts', in *Prestige, Authority and Power: Studies in Later Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. F. Riddy (York, 2000) pp. 77–101.

⁷ See, for example, *Chaucer the Critical Heritage, volume I, 1385–1837*, ed. D. Brewer (London, 1978).

⁸ *Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion . . . in Three Volumes* (Cambridge, 1925). All subsequent page references are to volume I and will be given in the text.

features 'enthusiastic and reverential praise by his contemporaries and immediate successors, which lasts to the end of the fifteenth century' (p. x). Her evidence is gleaned from eulogies to Chaucer by writers such as Hoccleve, Lydgate and Caxton, details now powerfully deployed by a long line of scholars, the most recent of whom are keen to show 'that Chaucer – as author, as "Laureate", and as "father" of English poetry – is a construction of his later fifteenth-century scribes, readers and poetic imitators'.⁹

The sheer weight of available data hardly encourages one to doubt the general appropriateness of such a statement. On the other hand, the devil is always in the detail. It is important to recognize that the supporting evidence for such a point of view is hardly scientific and thus must remain open to several different levels of rhetorical interpretation. Are all writers who explicitly praise Chaucer, at the same time as they stockpile some of his most characteristic and imaginative ideas and material for deployment in their own verse, merely seeking to compliment the dead poet by their actions, for example? An anecdotal reading of some of the codicological evidence can bring a sense of cultural specificity to this rhetorically important question. Such a reading suggests that the voluble praise of Chaucer and his work by Hoccleve and Lydgate must be examined in the context of other scraps of textual and manuscript detail that enable us to glimpse the activities of other, usually anonymous, fifteenth-century readers and copyists. Many seem to have worked tirelessly, but not, one suspects, entirely without reward, to promote their own ideas of what constituted an English poetic tradition in the generations after Chaucer's death.

Thomas Hoccleve's Chaucer

A. C. Spearing is one of the first modern critics to have recognized that Chaucer's influence on his later English followers occasionally manifested itself as a form of 'anxiety'.¹⁰ Thomas Hoccleve, it will be remembered, first utters his own name in the *Regiment of Princes* at the moment when a version of Chaucer's name is also pronounced: 'What schal I calle the? what is thi name?' asks the Old Man father figure in the poem at line 1863.¹¹ The answer immediately comes back:

⁹ Quotation from S. Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton, NJ, 1993), p. 3.

¹⁰ See especially the chapter entitled 'The Chaucerian Tradition' in *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 59–120.

¹¹ All quotations and line references are taken from *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. F. J. Furnivall EETS e.s. 72 (1897), with accents removed, abbreviations silently expanded and other textual comments and emendations indicated in the notes.

'Hoccleue, fadir myn, men clepen me.'
'Hoccleue, sone?' 'I wis, fadir, þat same.'
'Sone, I haue herd, or this, men speke of þe;
þou were aqueynted with Chaucer, pardee –
God haue his soule best of any wyght!' (lines 1864–8)¹²

In the course of this short exchange between poet and Old Man as 'father' and 'son', a situation is set up that will complicate Hoccleve's later and now much better known apostrophe to Chaucer as his second adoptive father and son pairing:

The firste fyndere of our faire langage,
Hath seyde in caas semblable, & othir moo,
So hyly wel, þat it is my dotage
ffor to expresse or touche any of thoo.
Alasse! my fadir fro þe worlde is goo –
My worthi maister Chaucer, hym I mene –
Be thou aduoket for hym, heuenes quene! (lines 4978–84)

The parenthesis at line 4983 hardly carries much weight and is not usually remarked upon, yet it is probably needed because the earlier conversational exchange between Hoccleve and the Old Man established that Hoccleve now has two adoptive fathers in this text. As such, its appearance offers important clarification of Chaucer's paternal bond to the younger poet in the narrative, just before Hoccleve is about to request formally the advocacy of heaven's queen for the illustrious second father who wrote 'ful many a line' in her praise when he was alive. Chaucer is dead, thus in no position to help himself. Following on from Hoccleve's quasi-legal petitioning on his behalf, the younger poet puts his readers in mind of the importance he attaches to offering them a truthful representation of Chaucer's physical appearance when he was alive:

Al-þogh his lyfe be queynt, þe resembaunce
Of him haþ in me so fressh lyflynesse,
þat, to putte othir men in remembraunce
Of his persone, I haue heere his lyknesse
Do make, to þis ende, in sothfastnesse,
þat þei þat haue of him lest þought & mynde,
By þis peynture may ageyn him fynde (lines 4992–8)¹³

¹² The poet's name is rendered uniquely as 'Caucher' at line 1867 in Furnivall's base manuscript, MS Harley 4866, and in his edition; in line with the readings in the other extant manuscripts, I regard this as a nonsense reading and have corrected Furnivall's printed text accordingly.

¹³ At line 4997, 'lest' represents the reading in Furnivall's base manuscript and in his edition, but London, British Library, MS Arundel 38 reads 'lost' at this point, probably offering readers a preferable reading; see the most recent edition of these lines in *Chaucer to Spenser: An Anthology*, ed. D. Pearsall (Oxford, 1999), p. 333.

Some visual representation of the dead poet is obviously intended at this point so that the Father of English poetry can once again properly illuminate an English poem.

Derek Pearsall's recent discussion of the authenticity of the 'Hoccleve' Chaucer portrait preserved on fol. 88r in London, British Library, MS Harley 4866 has drawn attention to the manner in which questions of accurate visual representation seem closely associated in the *Regiment* text to Hoccleve's reputation as a Lancastrian poet.¹⁴ Pearsall stresses that the visual representation of Chaucer as an English literary icon is accompanied by a textual allusion to the Lollard suspicion of religious images. It might be added that Hoccleve's quasi-professional interest in Chaucer's special attachment to the Virgin seems related to the interest some of his own Lancastrian patrons showed in appropriating and promoting Marian devotionism as an outward and visible sign of religious and political orthodoxy. Hoccleve's lament for Chaucer on his death bed and apostrophe to Death at an earlier part of the poem also seems to hint at other possible links between Chaucer's portrait and the manner in which Hoccleve's verse was sometimes presented to his readers:

O, maister deere, and fadir reuerent!
Mi maister Chaucer, flour of eloquence,
Mirour of fructuous entendement,
O, vniuersal fadir in science!
Allas! þat þou thyn excellent prudence,
In þi bed mortel mightist naght byqwethe;
What eiled deth? alas! whi wolde he sle the?

O deth! þou didest naght harme singuleer,
In slaghtere of him; but al þis land it smertith;
But nathelees, yit hast þou no power
His name sle; his hy vertu astertith
Vnslayn fro þe, which ay vs lyfly hertyth,
With bookes of his ornat endytyng,
That is to al þis land enlumynyng. (lines 1961–74)

The lines quoted above suggest that Chaucer's death can have no sting because he still has his name and virtuous reputation, and we still have the 'bookes of his ornat endytyng/ That is to al þis land enlumynyng' (lines 1973–4). Over three thousand lines later, Hoccleve deploys the same image of the book that is 'illuminated' by Chaucer to promote the *Regiment*. Readers are invited to bear witness to Chaucer's continuing ornate presence through Hoccleve's text, a presence that manifests itself as a visual image in just three of the forty-four extant *Regiment* manuscripts.¹⁵ All three books are fifteenth-

¹⁴ See especially 'Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*: The Poetics of Royal Self-Representation', *Speculum* 69 (1994), 386–410 (pp. 401–6).

¹⁵ The relevant portraits are discussed and reproduced in D. Pearsall, 'Appendix I:

century volumes: MS Harley 4866 (1411–12) was produced some fourteen years before Hoccleve's death and preserves the image of Chaucer that is now the best known of all among modern scholars; London, British Library, MS Royal 17. D. vi (1425–50) contains a portrait that was probably modelled on the one in Harley 4866, and Philadelphia, Rosenbach Library, MS 1083/10 (1425–50) has an eighteenth-century portrait that also shares visual details with Harley 4866. An image of Chaucer was probably once cut out of two other fifteenth-century *Regiment* copies: London, British Library, MS Arundel 38 (c. 1411–12), another early copy produced during Hoccleve's lifetime, and London, British Library, MS Harley 4826 (1450–75). The page that may have once contained a Chaucer portrait was lost from an exemplar lying behind the copies of the *Regiment* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Dugdale 45 (1425–50), and Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. vi. 17 (1475–1500).

Not only did most of the fifteenth-century readers of Hoccleve's *Regiment* probably not get to see the visual representation of Chaucer promised by the text, but any expectation that they would actually find Chaucer's verse 'al þis land enlumynyng' in their *Regiment* copies was usually also frustrated. In view of the relatively large number of surviving texts, it is perhaps initially surprising that examples of Chaucer's poetry are now found alongside Hoccleve's *Regiment* in just two manuscript collections known to have been compiled in the fifteenth century.¹⁶ London, British Library MS Harley 7333 (Ha5; 1450–60), is an omnium-gatherum of English literary items, parts of which were derived from items in the Londoner John Shirley's collection.¹⁷ The manuscript concludes abruptly with a fragmentary copy of lines 1–2016 only of the *Regiment* but also includes *Anelida and Arcite*, the *Canterbury Tales*, *Complaynt d'Amours*, *Gentilesse*, the *Complaint of Mars*, the *Parlement of Foules*, the *Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse*, *Lak of Stedfastnesse* and *Truth*. Coventry, City Record Office, MS Accession 325/1 (Co; c. 1450) also preserves a text of

The Chaucer Portraits', in *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford, 1992), 285–305; see also M. C. Seymour, 'The Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*', *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions* 4:7 (1974), 255–97, and the recent convenient revised summary listing in J. Burrow, *English Writers of the Late Middle Ages: Thomas Hoccleve* (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 50–4 (for convenience I have followed Burrow's general dating and numbering of the manuscripts).

¹⁶ Although it preserves fifteenth-century copies of the *Regiment* and verse by Chaucer, I have not included London, British Library, MS Harley 372 in this tally because it is a composite volume, made up of two manuscripts that were bound together after 1626; see Seymour, 'The Manuscripts', pp. 266–7.

¹⁷ For a recent description see M. C. Seymour, *A Catalogue of Chaucer Manuscripts, Volume I: Works before the Canterbury Tales* (Aldershot, 1995), pp. 21–3 and 39–40. The manuscript sigla are those employed for the forthcoming edition of the *Regiment*, for the progress of which see D. C. Greetham, 'Challenges of Theory and Practice in the Editing of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*', in *Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 60–86, and C. Blyth, 'Editing the *Regiment of Princes*', in *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, ed. C. Batt (London, 1996), pp. 11–28.

Hoccleve's *Regiment* and copies of several minor poems by Chaucer (an *ABC*, the *Envoy to Bukton*, *Gentillesse*, the *Complaint of Chaucer to his Purse*, *Lak of Stedfastnesse*, *Truth*).¹⁸ On every other occasion known to us, fifteenth-century readers whose appetite for Chaucer's verse had been whetted by the *Regiment* either had to reach down an entirely different book or else take some vicarious satisfaction from the experience of having Hoccleve read Chaucer for them.

Manuscripts Ha5 and Co are placed in close proximity to each other on the published stemma of *Regiment* manuscripts.¹⁹ It may well be that both collections share some closer connection to each other through John Shirley's contacts in the metropolitan book trade than is yet fully understood. Some metropolitan copyists also seem to have been promoting Hoccleve's verse in another established and interesting textual configuration. There are seven manuscripts in which the *Regiment* text is compiled alongside copies of the much shorter poetical compilation known as Hoccleve's *Series*.²⁰ Such a combination of material places Hoccleve's tribute to Chaucer in the context of a relatively disciplined and sustained effort to promote a particular style of quasi-autobiographical 'Hoccleve' anthology. The idea is eccentric enough to have originated with the poet himself. It offers a variation on the autobiographical and memorial themes of his three extant holograph manuscripts, in which Hoccleve obviously decided to include only poems he had himself composed. Hoccleve's manuscript headings in the holograph manuscripts are also in keeping with the role he carved out for himself in the *Regiment*, where he obviously enjoyed adopting the role of Henry V's 'acknowledged quasi-official writer of verse on political occasions'.²¹ Since the figure of Thomas the poet that emerges from self-referential writings such as the *Regiment* and the *Series* is sometimes also famously that of the loser or misfit, it may well be that Hoccleve even occasionally engaged in a programme of 'negative self-promotion'. His preoccupation with the various autobiographical themes in his work probably meant that he had no interest in replenishing the stock of Chaucer poems in circulation by adding some to his own anthology volumes. If the surviving manuscripts are a reliable guide, then Chaucer was originally included in Hoccleve's self-promotional programme solely on Hoccleve's terms: he is invoked spiritually and even bodily; he is alluded to as a fatherly inspiration and as an aureate source, but he still remains largely invisible in

¹⁸ Unaccountably, a description of this manuscript is not included in Seymour, *A Catalogue*, but see A. I. Doyle and G. B. Pace, 'A New Chaucer Manuscript', *PMLA* 83 (1968), 22–34, and Seymour, 'The Manuscripts', pp. 288–9.

¹⁹ Greetham, 'Challenges', pp. 66–7.

²⁰ Listed in Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, pp. 51–2. See also J. Burrow ed., *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, EETS o.s. 313 (Oxford, 1999).

²¹ The quotation is from *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford, 1981), p. xiii. For the autograph poems, see J. M. Bowers, 'Hoccleve's Huntington Holographs: The First "Collected Poems" in English', *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 15 (1989), 27–51, and a revised account in my 'A Poet's Contacts' (note 6).

terms of the poems he actually wrote. It is John Lydgate's short verse, and not Geoffrey Chaucer's, that is consistently found alongside the *Regiment*, in seventeen of the surviving manuscripts.²²

Given the extent of Hoccleve's suspected involvement in the early fifteenth-century organization of Chaucer's poetry – particularly the *Canterbury Tales* – the apparent absence of Chaucer's verse from the parallel promotional programmes organized early for the *Regiment* and Hoccleve's autograph copies of his other short verse certainly seems worthy of note. There is also some other manuscript and textual evidence to suggest that samples of Hoccleve's verse occasionally leaked into the major fifteenth-century textual traditions associated with the transmission of Chaucer's own short verse, including those represented by the 'Oxford-group' and textually-related manuscripts, and the manuscripts belonging to or ultimately derived from John Shirley's collection.²³ Although metropolitan copyists obviously sometimes handled examples of Hoccleve's verse alongside some of Chaucer's poems, the leakage of selected items into the Chaucer manuscript tradition seems to have remained a one-way process. A number of factors may have ensured that this was the case. Firstly, Hoccleve was alive and still working at the office of the Privy Seal in Westminster until the mid 1420s. Unlike Chaucer, he was perhaps in a position to influence personally the manner in which his verse was sometimes brought to the attention of a secondary audience about which much remains to be uncovered.²⁴ Hoccleve's livelihood

²² The seven *Regiment* manuscripts preserving copies of Lydgate's *Danse Macabre* are probably the most interesting in this respect. The metropolitan patron of Lydgate's text was John Carpenter; the Town Clerk of London during the latter part of Hoccleve's lifetime and also one of his benefactors who had property interests that brought him into contact with a number of different members of the London book trade. Carpenter also arranged for Lydgate to have the text of the *Danse Macabre* inscribed on the cloister walls of Pardon churchyard at St Paul's; for further details of Lydgate's commission, see D. Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371–1449): A Bio-Bibliography* (Victoria, BC, 1997), pp. 26–7.

²³ The manuscripts and Hoccleve items I have in mind are: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Fairfax 16, Bodley 638, Tanner 346, Digby 181 and Cambridge, University Library, MS Ff.1.6 ('Findern') ('Oxford group' and related manuscripts, all preserving copies of the *Letter of Cupid*); and Cambridge, Trinity College, MSS R. 3. 20 and R. 3. 21 (the first a Shirley volume containing the *Letter of Cupid*, and the second a Shirley-related collection, preserving the *Miracle of the Virgin*). Hoccleve's autograph copy of this text is addressed to Thomas Marleburgh, another important figure in the organized London book trade. The mid-fifteenth-century scribe who copied the *Regiment* in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Dugdale 45 has also recently been shown to have produced the *Canterbury Tales* text in Oxford, New College, MS 314; see S. Partridge, 'A Newly Identified Manuscript by the Scribe of the New College *Canterbury Tales*', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 6 (1997), 229–36.

²⁴ The same idea of a 'secondary audience' has been used to describe the expansion of Chaucer's 'primary', perhaps coterie, audience to include a socially and geographically more disparate fifteenth-century readership; see P. Strohm, 'Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the "Chaucer Tradition"', *Studies in the Age*

also seems to have depended upon a system of benefaction that probably encouraged him to write for such a public; it certainly brought him into contact with a number of influential Lancastrian patrons and other figures associated with the London book trade. In the autograph copies of his verse, Hoccleve names John Carpenter and Thomas Marleburgh as two such benefactors. Both were prominent Londoners (Carpenter had marked Lancastrian loyalties), and both men shared business interests in property that was leased out to members of the organized metropolitan book trade. After Hoccleve's death, such influential literary contacts may well have been responsible for securing the continued promotion and wider transmission of works such as the *Regiment*, the *Series*, the *Letter of Cupid*, and also the 1413 English translation of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de l'âme*. The latter item was, or perhaps became, a collaborative metropolitan venture, so it is interesting that 'ful many a lyne' of the verse written by Hoccleve in praise of the Virgin was incorporated into the prose translation.²⁵

The 'decommissioning' of John Lydgate's Chaucer

John Lydgate seized the opportunity offered by his 1426 verse translation of the second recension of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine* to heap fulsome praise on Chaucer's *ABC*, one of the relatively few Marian poems that the older poet is known to have composed. An *ABC* is generally considered a carefully-wrought verse rendering of a decorative religious lyric that Chaucer had originally found in de Deguileville.²⁶ For his English rendering, Lydgate chose not to translate the same French lyric, apparently because he was respectfully aware of the existence and worth of Chaucer's earlier version. By 1426, he may also have known about the example set by the anonymous Middle English prose translation of the first recension of the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*, where a text of an *ABC* is appropriately set into the narrative without further comment. Some larger homage to Chaucer was probably required for Lydgate's translation, however, since the Bury monk's work had been commissioned by Thomas Montagu, Earl of Salisbury and a prominent Lancastrian who served as John of Bedford's deputy in France. Lydgate's patron, who died at the siege of Orléans in 1428, was also the second husband of Alice Chaucer, the poet's granddaughter.²⁷

of Chaucer 4 (1982), 3–32; see also the chapter on 'Audience' in Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (London and Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 47–83.

²⁵ I intend to explore elsewhere the range of evidence suggesting the likely nature of Hoccleve's role in the 1413 de Deguileville project, but see also the sceptical account casting doubt on Hoccleve's involvement in Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, p. 24.

²⁶ Further details and bibliographical references in Thompson, 'Chaucer's *An ABC*', esp. pp. 38–43.

²⁷ There is a summary of the biographical details relating to the Salisbury commission

The extended praise of Chaucer in the *Pilgrimage* may in part represent Lydgate's politic gesture to a powerful literary patron who was related to the dead poet through his wife's illustrious line of descent. But Lydgate's words strongly imply that he was capitalizing on the reputation of Chaucer's verse to enhance the prestige of his own commission.²⁸ Lydgate nostalgically evokes the image of the great writer who is now dead but who once devoutly and accurately translated 'ful many a line' from the French:

Whylom (yff I shal nat feyne)
The noble poete off Breteyne,
My mayster Chaucer, in hys tyme,
Affter the Frenche he dyde yt ryme,
Word by word, as in substaunce,
Ryght as yt ys ymad in Fraunce,
fful devoutly, in sentence,
In worshepe, and in reuerence
Off that noble hevenly quene,
Bothe moder and a mayde clene
And sythe, he dyde yt vndertake,
ffor to translate yt ffor hyr sake,
I pray thys [Quene] that ys the beste,
ffor to brynge hys soule at reste,
That he may, thorgh hir prayere,
Aboue the sterrys bryht and clere,
Off hyr mercy and hyr grace
Aperre afforn hyr sonys fface,
Wyth seyntyng euere, for A memorye,
Eternally to regne in glorie. (lines 1975–72)

The master can obviously no longer speak for himself but Lydgate's words on his behalf seem a strange way to describe Chaucer's transformation of the text in his French source by an editorial programme of judicious selection and

in Pearsall, *Lydgate Bio-Bibliography*, pp. 27–8; see also C. Meale, 'Reading Women's Culture in Fifteenth-Century England: The Case of Alice Chaucer', in *Mediaevalitas: Reading the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Boitani and A. Torti (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 81–101 and plates. It is worth noting that a fifteenth-century drawing, possibly a copy of the original presentation miniature for Lydgate's translation, has now been pasted in as fol. 1* of London, British Library, MS Harley 4826, the *Regiment* manuscript mentioned briefly above because it has had its Chaucer portrait removed (fol. 139). Inscriptions in the book suggest that it was still being read in the seventeenth century, when notes on Lydgate were added. The volume also contains Lydgate's *Lives of St Edmund and St Fremund* and his *Legend of St Austin*, together with a text of his *Secreta Secretorum* that has lost a leaf; see the description in Seymour, 'The Manuscripts', pp. 268–9.

²⁸ All references are to the text in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man, Englisht by John Lydgate*, ed. F. J. Furnivall and K. B. Locock, EETS e.s. 77, 83, 92 (1899, 1901, 1904, repr. in 1 vol., 1973). Accents have been removed and abbreviations silently expanded.

pruning. The Bury monk also fails to acknowledge the manner in which the legal terminology used in the *ABC* shows Chaucer's early linguistic experimentation and delight in taking a fresh approach to the standard religious sentiments of his age. It is not clear that this feature would necessarily have appealed to Lydgate, for whom the conventional expression of religious orthodoxy would probably have seemed a safer bet.²⁹ And Lydgate's comments give no hint of the radical metrical change in Chaucer's de Deguileville version, where the octosyllabic couplets of the French source are rendered as alternately rhyming decasyllabic lines in the English version. His encomium instead conjures up the memory of a devout translator who is now dead and absent, rather than the father of English poetry whose work will presumably live on for ever. Lydgate here seems determined to transform Chaucer's achievement into that of a religious poet who was not unlike himself in a number of important respects. At the same time, the Bury monk was bound by a public debt to Chaucer that also seems to have bound Hoccleve: both fifteenth-century poets owe much to the memory of the father, whose sweet rhetoric was responsible not only for setting the standard of the vernacular poetic diction that they self-consciously employ but also for enhancing the general quality of the English language.

If Lydgate has acknowledged Chaucer as the great English translator then it is fascinating to witness how he grants himself the role of literary compiler and book producer in the lines immediately following:

And ffor memoyre off that poete,
Wyth al hys rethorykes swete,
That was the ffyrste in any age
That amendede our langage;
Therefore, as I am bounde off dette,
In thys book I wyl hym sette,
And ympen thys Oryson
Affter hys translacion,
My purpos to determyne,
That yt shal enlwmyne
Thys lytyl book, Rud off makynge,
Wyth som clause off hys wrytyng.
And as he made thys Orysoun
Off ful devout entencioun,
And by maner off a prayere,
Ryht so I wyl yt settyn here,
That men may knowe and pleynly se
Off Our Lady the .A. b. c. (lines 19773–90)

²⁹ The point has already been made that 'most innovation in Lydgate's poetry . . . is not . . . of the kind we admire in Chaucer'; see D. Pearsall, 'Lydgate as Innovator', *Modern Language Quarterly* 53 (1992), 5–22.

As a token of his debt to the dead poet, Chaucer's *ABC* will be grafted on to the *Pilgrimage* text in this very book. By such a process of inscription, Chaucer will 'illuminate' Lydgate, through a gesture that self-consciously and reverentially reverses the circumstances in which the dead older poet presumably first extracted material for the Marian prayer from his French de Deguileville version. As readers and outsiders we are invited to look over the Bury monk's shoulder and watch this process in action as he devoutly works on the Lancastrian commission that would incorporate Chaucer's poem in its new 'Lydgatian' de Deguileville setting.

The complete absence of any remnant of Chaucer's verse in the manuscript and textual tradition associated with Lydgate's 1426 translation is perhaps the most bizarre feature of the whole ambitious enterprise. One would give a lot to know how the *Pilgrimage* was presented in the paper copy once owned by Alice Chaucer, unlikely to have been an early presentation copy but clearly enough described in a 1466 booklist for us to gain some sense of its utility as 'a boke of English in papir of þe pilgrymage translated by daune John lydgate out of frensh couered with blak lether withowte bordes'.³⁰ While it is simply inconceivable that Alice would not have wanted a text of her famous grandfather's religious poem inserted in the work that had been originally commissioned by her late husband, it also has to be recognized that there is no evidence in the four extant manuscripts that Lydgate's proposal to insert Chaucer's text in his translation ever finally took place. In the London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C.13 text, on the verso of the end flyleaf, there is instead a note stating, 'Our Ladye's A.B.C. 50 leafes from the end'. At the appropriate place in the body of this manuscript, where the *ABC* should have been inserted, a space has been left for the Chaucer text that has never been filled. Similarly, in London, British Library MS Stowe 952 (the only other text that is intact at the crucial point), a space has been left for the *ABC*, and the initials A, B, C etc. for each of the missing stanzas have been inserted, without the Chaucer text having been added. In both these manuscripts, Lydgate's words in praise of Chaucer are followed by an embarrassing gap, a blank space that can be accorded the status of evidence since it would appear to require some further codicological explanation.

The later owner and second copyist of MS Stowe 952 was John Stow, the Tudor collector and corrector of manuscripts who was also a Chaucer editor.³¹ At some stage after his 1561 Chaucer edition, Stow examined and annotated Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16 and London, British Library, MS Harley 2251. He is also known to have consulted Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4. 27 and Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS

³⁰ Quoted from Meale, 'Reading Women's Culture', p. 86, with the abbreviations silently expanded.

³¹ See the account of his career in A. Hudson, 'John Stow (1525?-1605)', in *Editing Chaucer, the Great Tradition*, ed. P. G. Ruggiers (Norman, OK, 1984), 53-70.

Pepys 2006. It is salutary to note that any one of these four Chaucer manuscripts could have provided Stow with a text of the *ABC* with which to make good the gap in the MS Stowe 952 text of Lydgate's de Deguileville translation. Any one of these manuscripts would have provided Stow with copy text so that the *ABC* could have been added to the printed Chaucer canon. Prior to 1561, however, Stow simply does not seem to have been interested in recommissioning Chaucer's Marian poem for either one of these purposes. Instead, the *ABC* had to wait until 1602, and Thomas Speght's second Chaucer edition, for its first printing.

Speght was doubtless much influenced by Stow's continuing editorial detective work in fifteenth-century manuscripts. When the *ABC* finally joined Chaucer's other poems in print, its text probably represented one of two quite contradictory 'voices' that Speght heard reflected in the Chaucer canon.³² One of these was the unreformed, yet apparently authentic, authorial voice represented by a poem that was 'made, as some say, at the Request of Blanch, Duchesse of Lancaster, as a praier for her priuat vse, being a woman in her religion very deuout', according to Speght's rubric for the *ABC*. The other is represented by the more strident reformed voice of the *Complaint against friars* of Jack Upland. Speght's 1602 text of the *Complaint* was taken from the second edition of John Foxe's *Actes and Monumentes*, a copy that claimed the work for Chaucer and was itself derived from a 1536(?) print by John Gough, where a similar attribution is made. On the title page of his second Chaucer edition, Speght yokes both items, describing this unlikely pairing as 'The Treatise called Jack Vpland, against Friers: and Chaucer's A.B.C. called La Priere de nostre Dame, at this Impression added'. His text of the *ABC* was taken from the copy in Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4. 27, but his French title was probably based on the heading now extant elsewhere only in MS Pepys 2006, a manuscript that Stow had probably already consulted by 1602.³³

The fairly prolonged absence of the *ABC* from some pre-modern and early modern settings where it might reasonably have been expected to survive can be compared to the situation in the six extant manuscripts of the anonymous early fifteenth-century English prose translation of the *Pèlerinage de la vie humaine*.³⁴ Near the end of Book 3 in the prose version, the Pilgrim-sinner describes how Grace Dieu has given him hope in the form of a miraculously-produced abecedarian written text that he proceeds to unfold:

Now I telle yow þe scripture I vndide, and unplytede it, and redde it and maade at alle poyntes my preyeere in þe foorme and in þe maneere þat þe

³² For an account of Speght's editorial career see D. Pearsall, 'Thomas Speght (ca. 1550-?)', in *Editing Chaucer*, ed. Ruggiers, pp. 71-92.

³³ See George B. Pace, 'Speght's Chaucer and MS Gg.4.27', *Studies in Bibliography* 21 (1968), 225-35. Pace assumes, unnecessarily, that Speght's French heading was once preserved on a leaf that is now missing from MS Gg. 4. 27.

³⁴ For text, line references and manuscript descriptions, see *The Pilgrimage of the Lyfe of the Manhode*, ed. A. Henry, 2 vols., EETS o.s. 288 and 292 (1985, 1988).

same scripture conteenede, and as Grace hadde seyde it. þe foorme of þe scripture ye shule heere. If 'A.B.C.' wel ye kunne, wite it ye mown lightliche, for to sey it if it be neede. (lines 5827–32)

The task of providing an appropriate prayer for this English de Deguileville version is here imaginatively conceived as something that was literally child's play, as easy as ABC. All six of the extant manuscripts insert a text of the ABC at this point, copies that represent six of the seven beta-group texts, together making up almost half of the sixteen extant manuscripts preserving Chaucer's short poem.³⁵ Neither the anonymous translator of the English prose de Deguileville version nor the original copyists of the beta-group manuscripts give their readers any indication that the miracle prayer that is here inscribed was originally written by Chaucer.³⁶

In their different ways, the two fifteenth-century English de Deguileville versions have memorialized Chaucer in his absence. Chaucer is absent from the prose version because his text has been presented anonymously, reappropriated and set into a new English version of the French setting in which the de Deguileville prayer had originally been embedded. Such is the fate of poems enjoying manuscript circulation when they 'were not necessarily, or primarily, valued as biographical expressions of a known author, but as reusable texts, belonging to a shared culture'.³⁷ The absence of Chaucer in the Lydgatian de Deguileville setting is even more intriguing. The Bury monk's respectful words of praise for the dead poet seem to have created a kind of institutionalized blank space that nobody else seems to have been prepared to fill: *figura neminis quia nemo in ea depictus*.³⁸ Such an apparent and unnatural vacuum near the beginning of the Lydgatian version of 'The

³⁵ For a listing of the manuscripts and a summary account of their textual affiliation see *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. L. D. Benson (Oxford, 1987), p. 1185. The other beta-group manuscript is London, British Library, MS Additional 36983, an ingeniously compiled anthology, described and analysed in Thompson, *The Cursor Mundi: Poem, Texts and Contexts* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 95–8.

³⁶ The manuscripts in question include John Shirley's copy in London, Sion College, MS Arc. L 40.2/E.44, where it was left to a later 'non-Shirley' hand to discover that the ABC was indeed Chaucer's poem; see *Pilgrimage*, ed. Henry, I, 323 (variant reading for line 5834). In the eight extant alpha copies, by contrast, the ABC survives in manuscript settings that would have readily identified it as a Chaucer piece; see Thompson, 'Chaucer's *An ABC*', pp. 41–3.

³⁷ E. Heale, *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry* (Harlow, 1998), p. 5. On the general significance of 'social textuality' in the manuscript culture of the early modern period, see A. F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), esp. pp. 135–208. Aspects of many similar codicological issues for the slightly earlier period are identified in my 'Textual Instability and the Late Medieval Reputation of Some Middle English Religious Literature', *TEXT* 5 (1990), 175–94.

³⁸ 'A representation of Nobody since Nobody is depicted in it!' Quotation taken from the heading accompanying the institutionalized blank space on the title page of the printed version of the mock *Sermo pauperis Henrici de sancto Nemine*; reproduced as the frontispiece in M. Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1996).

Chaucer Tradition' is not unlike the situation created by Thomas Hoccleve in the *Regiment of Princes*. Hoccleve promises a true likeness of Chaucer in his written text, but all that the majority of *Regiment* readers experienced in return for this promise of verisimilitude was a blank margin, or a side note drawing attention to Chaucer's absence, or, worse, evidence of a torn out leaf where a possibly authentic portrait may have once stood.

The codicological evidence I have been discussing anecdotally in this essay is usually seamlessly woven into the story of the beginnings of 'The Chaucer Tradition' in English poetry. This is how Caroline Spurgeon's magisterial survey presents the quotations from Hoccleve's *Regiment* (on pp. 21–3) and from Lydgate's *De Deguileville* version (on pp. 34–5). Alongside the enthusiastic recognition by fifteenth-century writers such as Hoccleve and Lydgate that the land has been illuminated by the many books of Chaucer's verse now in circulation – occasionally, perhaps, in circulation because of their own special efforts – there is the equally strong desire to associate Chaucer's name and reputation with the promotion of other quite different kinds of poetical anthologies and compilations in which they have made some considerable personal investment. An interesting paradox that has hitherto not shown up in the data is that the same poets who made such determined efforts to memorialize the father of English poetry sometimes also seem to have contributed to the 'decommissioning' of his verse. By this I mean that both Hoccleve and Lydgate may have participated (usually inadvertently) in the gradual dismantling of the hard textual evidence relating to Chaucer's actual poetical achievement.

Caroline Spurgeon's survey uneasily associates such a phenomenon with the mid-Tudor period and her third stage in the fluctuations of Chaucer's literary reputation, when the culturally-powerful resonance of the idea that Chaucer is the father of English poetry seems to have begun to fade: 'now, however, begins to creep in that general belief . . . that Chaucer was obsolete, that his language was very difficult to understand, his style rough and unpolished, and his versification imperfect' (p. x). One might perhaps begin to develop an argument in response to this statement, an argument that would show how the scholarly reconstruction of Chaucer's life and achievement – effectively, the recommissioning of his verse – could only properly have taken place at exactly the same mid-Tudor period largely because of the highly-developed scholarly interest in different ways of thinking about authors, texts, books and printing. Equally, the much less spectacular and often accidental decommissioning processes I have been describing in this essay seem to have got under way almost immediately after Chaucer's death. They represent a fascinating counter-current in English literary history, offering moments of resistance to a master narrative that would stress the shared values of a monolithic 'Medieval' literary culture, one that is dominated by Chaucer as 'The Middle Ages' moves towards its inevitable demise

before 'The Renaissance' then takes centre stage. It has been said before and it needs to be frequently restated that 'The Middle Ages' is a post-medieval construction. Anecdotal evidence may be helpful in this context because it brings along with it a cultural specificity that has an inevitable splintering effect: the anecdote will hardly permit us to forget for long that the codicological and textual details we cherish so highly as evidence probably represent little more than the scattered tiny shards of a complex, and almost unimaginably various, fifteenth-century cultural mosaic.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

David Benson teaches English and medieval literature at the University of Connecticut. He has published books and articles on Chaucer, Langland, Lydgate, the Troy story, and a variety of other Middle English topics.

Norman Blake has written extensively on Chaucer, Caxton and the history of the English language. He retired from the University of Sheffield, where he was Head of the Department of English Language, in 1999. He continues his involvement with the *Canterbury Tales* Project, which he inaugurated at Sheffield, with a position as Research Professor at De Montfort University.

Julia Boffey is Reader in Medieval Studies in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London. Her interests include Middle English and sixteenth-century English verse, and the history of the book in the late medieval and early Renaissance periods.

Dr A. I. Doyle, Honorary Reader in Bibliography and former Keeper of Rare Books, University of Durham. Member of the Comité International de Paléographie Latine, Fellow of the British Academy and Corresponding Fellow of the Medieval Academy of America.

Martha W. Driver is Professor of English at Pace University in New York. A co-founder of the Early Book Society for the study of manuscripts and printing history, she edits the *Journal of the Early Book Society*, has recently published articles in the *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch*, and is also guest-editor for two numbers of *Film & History: The Medieval Period in Film*.

A. S. G. Edwards is Professor of English at the University of Victoria.

Prof. Dr J. P. Gumbert is Professor of Western Palaeography and Codicology in Leiden University (until 2001). Books: *Manuscripts datés conservés dans les Pays-Bas* II (1988); *The Dutch and their Books in the Manuscript Age* (1990).

Ralph Hanna is Professor of Palaeography in the University of Oxford and tutorial fellow in English at Keble College. His primary interest, with Langland's *Piers Plowman* at its centre, is in later medieval 'English' (Middle English, (Anglo-)Latin, Anglo-Norman) literary culture.

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton is Professor of English at the University of Victoria and a Visiting Member of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. She has published *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (1990) and, with Denise Despres, *Iconography and the Professional Reader: The Politics of Book Production in the Douce Piers Plowman* (1999).

Contributors

Linne Mooney is Professor of English at the University of Maine. Her interests are later medieval English manuscripts, scribes, distribution of texts, and the connections between literature and social history.

Derek Pearsall is Gurney Professor of English, *Emeritus*, at Harvard University, and Honorary Research Professor at the University of York.

Eckehard Simon is Victor S. Thomas Professor of Germanic Languages at Harvard University. He has written on the court poet Neidhart, on Gutenberg, described manuscripts and edited texts from them. He is currently reconstructing the history of medieval German theater from records in town archives.

Alison Stones is Professor of the History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh and a Research Associate of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her publications are on manuscript illumination in the high Middle Ages, particularly of hagiography, history and pseudo-history, and literature.

John J. Thompson is Senior Lecturer in English at the Queen's University of Belfast, currently completing *English Literary Anthologies: Books and Poems, c.1300–1600*. His previously published work includes *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript* (1987) and *The Cursor Mundi: Poem, Texts and Contexts* (1998).

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